**SUNGLASSES**

In the midst of the short, cold days of winter, many of us stash away our shades until the spring and summer months. But to keep your sight sharp and your eyes healthy, proper eyewear is essential – no matter what the season! Exposure to wind, glare and even winter UV exposure can damage your eyes.

**Why Winter Counts**

Many people enjoy winter activities like skiing and skating. Others work outdoors all year round. But winter can wreak havoc on unprotected eyes, sometimes even more so than in sunny summer months. Although we can’t see it, we are exposed to UV radiation daily, even in overcast weather – a fact many of us forget when the temperatures start to drop. And because snow reflects almost 80 percent of UV radiation, your overall exposure is nearly doubled when skiing, snowboarding, or working in the snow.

Too much sun exposure can actually change the cells, causing damage that tends to show up later in life. Studies show that even small amounts of sun exposure on a regular basis can result in cumulative eye damage. Children are at risk for many years of exposure. Cataracts, macular degeneration with resulting blindness, and potentially serious lesions are some of the long-term effects linked to UV exposure. So, sunglasses are important for everyone at all ages year round.

Perhaps you don’t spend time outdoors other than driving to and from work. Sunglasses are still important to protect your eyes from long term damage and in certain circumstances even improve your vision. In addition to helping you avoid squinting in bright light, and shielding you from UV rays, the right sunglasses can actually help you see better at night. Some of us have reached a point in life where driving at night is sometimes a little challenging – especially in rain and fog or when there are lots of headlights from oncoming traffic. If so, wearing yellow tinted sunglasses can make a big difference.

**How to Choose the Right Pair**

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, the best place to start is with your eye doctor. Because your doctor knows y our prescription requirement, he or she will be able to provide information you need to customize a pair of sunglasses. If you choose your own sunglasses, be sure to check the label and choose a pair with 100% UVA/UVB protection. Anything less will allow some radiation to leak through and damage precious vision.

Take care of your eyes! Wear those sunglasses.

Be Well!