



Taking A Look At Photokeratitis

While everyone is well aware of what a day in the sun can do to unprotected skin, fewer people know their eyes can also get sunburned. Photokeratitis is a painful condition that occurs after prolonged exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun and other UV light sources.

In much the same way you don't notice your skin getting sunburned, you often won't feel the effects of overexposure to UV rays until after the damage happens. Although intense exposure can cause symptoms within an hour, it's far more typical to experience discomfort and other visual disturbances after six to twelve hours. Whatever the case may be, it's essential to keep one thing in mind; photokeratitis is, for the most part, a preventable condition.

Be extra mindful of protecting your eyes from overexposure to UV light during the following activities:

- When enjoying outdoor recreational pursuits, safeguard your eyes from prolonged exposure to direct sunlight and reflections off the water, sand, ice, or snow. (Snow blindness is a type of photokeratitis.)
- If using a sunlamp, therapeutic high-intensity UV lamp, germicidal UV lamp, or other UV light source, make sure to wear protective eyewear.
- Because even a few seconds of exposure to a welding arc affects the unprotected eyes, it's an absolute must for welders and any close bystanders to shield and protect their eyes.

What you may feel

Photokeratitis affects both the cornea and the conjunctiva covering the eyeball and inside of the eyelids. The severity of symptoms depends on the length and intensity of UV light exposure. Symptoms are uncomfortable and upsetting. They might include redness, pain, tearing, a gritty feeling, swollen red eyelids, light sensitivity, constricted pupils, headaches, eyelid twitching, blurred vision, seeing halos, and experiencing excessive glare. In rare cases, temporary vision loss or temporary color changes in vision occur.

See your eye doctor for prompt diagnosis and care. Whenever you or a loved one are experiencing eye discomfort and visual disturbances, it's wise to contact your eye doctor for a prompt evaluation and care. While the damage caused by photokeratitis, is in most cases, temporary, your eye doctor will provide you with essential guidance and care necessary to help resolve symptoms, promote healing, and alleviate your discomfort.

With a diagnosis of photokeratitis, you may be advised not to wear your contact lenses until the symptoms have resolved and told to rest your eyes away from any obvious sources of UV light. It's also critical to avoid rubbing your eyes or doing anything that may further irritate them. Your eye doctor might write you a prescription for medicated eye drops or artificial tears and even recommend a cold compress to help soothe your eyes. To further reduce any discomfort, over-the-counter pain relievers are often suggested.

Your trusted partner in care
You can count on your eye doctor to closely monitor your recovery and provide further treatment as indicated. You'll also be advised of the best ways to safeguard your eyes and avoid preventable injuries or damage.

