

## Help kids set their sights on healthy eyes

Some sunshine is good for children. Sun exposure is an important source of vitamin D, which helps strengthen bones. However, childhood sun exposure can also damage the eye's lens and retina and may lead to cataracts later in life.

Help your children protect their eyes from ultraviolet (UV) light by wearing sunglasses. Children and babies should wear sunglasses even if they are in the sun for a short time.

Sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UV rays have a special chemical in the lens and help with protection. Buy sunglasses that say "blocks 99 percent of UV rays" or "UV absorption to 400 nm."

Select a style that wraps around your child's temples to keep the sun's rays from entering from the side. Keep in mind that expensive sunglasses do not necessarily mean you are getting high-quality lenses or ultraviolet blockage.

Other eye safety tips for children include:

- Wearing wide-brimmed hats in the sun.
- Making sure children play safe. Avoid toys that shoot small objects, such as darts or arrows.
- Supervising children if they are handling potentially dangerous objects, such as scissors, forks or knives.

### What can you do to help prevent obesity in your children?

If your children eat less healthy food and do not get enough physical activity, they may be at risk for becoming overweight. This can become a serious problem. Being overweight can cause other physical health problems. This includes diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, sleeping problems and adult obesity. It can also lead to poor self-esteem and depression. Self-esteem issues, feeling guilty and always worrying about being overweight can lead to other problems, like eating disorders.

To deal with and prevent being overweight, try to encourage your children to:

- Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily. This can be as simple as walking to school or to a friend's house after school. Playing an outdoor game once a day can help.
- Eat a more balanced diet. Try salad or fruits and vegetables instead of a burger and fries. Cut down on soda and other high-sugar snacks.
- Practice regular eating habits. Eating a regular, nutritionally balanced breakfast can help with cravings for mid-morning, unhealthy snacks.
- Get into a regular sleep cycle. Going to bed and getting up at the same time each day helps regulate the body's metabolism.



Be aware that common household items, including paper clips, rubber bands and staples, can cause eye injuries.