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Fact Sheet: Snow Blindness

Snow blindness is a very common form of photokeratitis, which is a burn to the cornea from over exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light. Snow is highly reflective and can reflect up to 80% incident UV radiation. It is important to prevent this condition, as you could permanently affect your vision.

Symptoms

- Feeling of grit in eyes
- Increased tear production
- Uncontrolled twitching of eyelids
- Redness
- Pain
- Distorted vision (halos, blurriness)
- Light sensitivity
- Swelling
- Temporary loss of vision

Prevention

- Use sunglasses or goggles that should be rated for 99-100% UV absorption. They should be wraparound or side shielded with large lenses that fit close to the face.
- Make sure you have appropriate eye protection, even on overcast days.

First Aid Treatment

- If you experience this, remove yourself from exposure by going into a darkened room or tent.
- Remove contact lenses until your eyes return to normal.
- Apply a cool compress to your eyes. Manage pain with over-the-counter medication.
- This condition may take a few days to heal.
- If pain or vision distortion continues more than a few days after exposure, seek medical attention.

References and Additional Resources

- American Academy of Ophthalmology: [Photokeratitis](#)
- World Health Organization: [The known health effects of UV](#)
- Adapted from *Snow Blindness Fact Sheet*, by University of Maryland: Department of Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk (<https://essr.umd.edu/about/research-safety/field-research-safety/planning>) with permission.