

Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment featuring news you can use to live a healthier life. This is Katie Johnson, and joining me as my guest today is Dr. Heidi Ottenbacher. She works in the eye clinic at Lake Region Healthcare, and she's here to talk to us about UV safety month. Good morning, Dr. Ottenbacher.

Dr. Ottenbacher: Good morning.

Katie Johnson: Thank you for joining us today. Before we start, tell me a little bit about your history. How long you've been at Lake Region Healthcare, and maybe your background.

Dr. Ottenbacher: I've been at Lake Region Healthcare for about six years now. I started out in Duluth, Minnesota, and then I kind of moved here for the position. I've enjoyed it very much here with Lake Region.

Katie Johnson: Awesome. You're in the new eye clinic, in Lake Region Healthcare's new clinic building right next to 20/20 Optical. Really kind of an ideal situation from an eye clinic standpoint, I would imagine.

Dr. Ottenbacher: Yes, that works out wonderful. The new clinic has been great, and the patients really love going right over to the optical. We can send them right over there. It works out great.

Katie Johnson: Is there any new technology or new processes or procedures in the new clinic that make the process of having your eye exam done here different or better?

Dr. Ottenbacher: We have gotten some new machines here, new equipment in the offices and the exam rooms. It kind of makes it a little bit easier for our technicians, but then also for us to kind of refine a person's prescription and check their eyes thoroughly.

Katie Johnson: Excellent. As I mentioned, it's UV safety month, and I want to talk specifically about the UV rays and the danger that they pose to our eyes, and how we can prevent those, but let's start out by talking about what is a UV ray?

Dr. Ottenbacher: UV ray is ultraviolet radiation. It's just a form of energy that's emitted from the sun, and the amount of energy here can affect our eyes just as well as we know it can affect our skin. It comes in three different wavelengths that we've all heard of, UVA, B, and C.

Katie Johnson: What kind of dangers do those UV rays and the three specific kinds pose specifically to our eyes? Like you mentioned, we hear about it with our skin all the time, and wearing the proper SPF and looking for the UVA and UVB protection, but when it comes to our eyes, what's different there?

Dr. Ottenbacher: As far as the UV rays in the eyes here, it's more a cumulative over the years kind of damage that can happen. We're looking at more so for cataracts, like eye growths

on the eye. Also cancer, macular degeneration, but some things that can happen, not so much cumulative that can happen right away is also caratitis, which is kind of like a sunburn that you can get on your eyes.

Katie Johnson: How do you know if that's happened, and what should you do about it?

Dr. Ottenbacher: A patient, if they do have something like caratitis, kind of the sunburn on the eyes, they will experience pain, redness, tearing, lots of light sensitivity. If that happens, you should definitely go in and have it checked. We check in the office with our equipment, and then if we need to, we'll go ahead and treat it.

Katie Johnson: What does treatment involve?

Dr. Ottenbacher: Depending on how severe it is, they may require maybe some ointment or something on the eyes. Maybe even just lubricating the eyes, and of course protecting the eyes for a period of time.

Katie Johnson: What times or places or situations are especially dangerous for UV exposure to our eyes?

Dr. Ottenbacher: I guess the main time that most people know, around that 10:00 to 2:00 time. The sun, when it's higher, you're going to get more UV exposure. Also, for us, we're around the lake, so when you're in that open area being on the lake, you have to be more careful. You need to protect your eyes.

Katie Johnson: The reflection off the water, does that impact it, or is it just that it's wide open?

Dr. Ottenbacher: It does impact it. You get more of that ultraviolet radiation reflecting off the water.

Katie Johnson: How about in the winter? Does reflection off the snow?

Dr. Ottenbacher: Oh yes, definitely.

Katie Johnson: Because I know I squint more.

Dr. Ottenbacher: Yes, yes. It pretty doubles. It's amazing how much more UV radiation you get reflecting off the snow.

Katie Johnson: In an eye exam, exactly how do you check for the UV damage to the eye?

Dr. Ottenbacher: We use some of our equipment here. With our [inaudible 04:14] lamp exams that we have here, we can check the front of the eye, taking a look at the front surface for any type of the caratitis, and then we look in the eye. Looking at the lens and possible cataracts or anything, and then of course we check in the back of the eye here for maybe macular degeneration or any changes there.

Katie Johnson: What are the steps we can take to prevent this type of damage to our eyes both for

kids and adults alike?

Dr. Ottenbacher: What you can really do is a really good pair of sunglasses. Just make sure that it has UV 100% protection, A and B. A hat, or maybe a wide brimmed hat. Something like that would really be good to protect your eyes.

Katie Johnson: With kids, at least I know when my kids were little, they didn't like anything on their face. Is a hat maybe better for kids, or other tips you have for them?

Dr. Ottenbacher: You know, I would probably try both the hat and some sunglasses. One thing too is it doesn't have to be an expensive pair of sunglasses for kids because they may lose them or they don't like to keep them on. You may have to get them multiple pairs, and you can just pick some up at the store. Just make sure it has UV A-B 100% protection.

Katie Johnson: Maybe one in the car, one in the playground area, you know? Have a pair everywhere. Make it easy. Any other tips for selecting the right sunglasses? You mentioned the 100% UV protection, but other tips about what makes a good pair of sunglasses in terms of protection?

Dr. Ottenbacher: Mainly that UV 100% A and B protection. Lens color is kind of more optional and personal choice on which color lens you get. Either one, it's the same. You're going to get the same protection as long as it's 100% UV. You can always check with your local optical and just have the optician fit you for the sunglasses. Something that's more form fitting to your face too will protect and block out more of the rays.

Katie Johnson: I was wondering about that. If something that maybe wraps around your eyes a little bit more is more protective. I'm sure if it's more comfortable, you're just more likely to wear them.

Dr. Ottenbacher: Yes, definitely. Definitely.

Katie Johnson: Any other eye care advice that we should share with our listeners today as we are in the middle of summer and making sure we want to protect our eyes not only from the sun but maybe when you're mowing lawn or the other activities of summer?

Dr. Ottenbacher: I think just to kind of recap everything. Just as you protect your skin from the UV exposure, just remember to protect your eyes with the sunglasses. Protect everyone from the youngest to the oldest. Whatever activity you're doing whether you're in the water or mowing the lawn, definitely protect your eyes with some sunglasses.

Katie Johnson: That's great advice from Dr. Heidi Ottenbacher at the eye clinic here at Lake Region Healthcare, my guest today on Apple a Day for UV Safety month reminding us all to keep those peepers covered and protected from the sun this summer. Dr. Heidi Ottenbacher, thank you so much for your time with us this morning.

Dr. Ottenbacher: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: Heidi Ottenbacher and Katie Johnson here on Apple a Day today reminding you there's so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.