



HEALTH ADVISORY

DATE: April 6, 2024

Health Risks Associated to Solar Eclipse

Background Information:

On Monday, April 8, 2024, the borderland region will witness a partial solar eclipse where up to 80%-85% of the sun will be covered by the moon. The natural event will begin around 11:15 a.m. and will end at around 1:45 p.m.

The main health risk associated with watching a solar eclipse (or looking directly at the sun any time) is damage to the eyes. The sun emits light rays that can be visible but also others that are invisible such as ultraviolet (UV) and infrared (IR). During the day and when there is an eclipse, high levels of UV and IR radiation/rays are emitted from the sun and are responsible for damages to the eyes of people who look directly into the sun or during an eclipse, leading to discomfort, inflammation, tissue damage, and blindness.

Looking directly at the sun during an eclipse without proper eye protection, even for a short time, can damage your eyes, particularly your retina and those negative effects can be permanent. The retina is a very specialized light-sensitive tissue in the back of the eye that sends signals to your brain, enabling vision. Damage to the eyes can range from temporary irritation (Solar or Photo Keratitis) to as serious as Macular Edema and Solar Retinopathy leading to permanent blindness.

Recommendations for the Community:

IT IS NEVER SAFE TO LOOK AT THE ECLIPSE DIRECTLY WITHOUT PROPER PROTECTION

Those who want to watch the eclipse need to keep in mind that **there is only ONE safe way to look directly at the sun**, and this can be done through special **solar filters**.

These solar filters are used in “eclipse glasses” or in hand-held solar viewers. They must meet a very specific worldwide standard known as **ISO 12312-2**.

Keep in mind that **ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, or homemade filters are NOT SAFE for looking at the sun during the eclipse**. Never look at the sun through binoculars, photo cameras, telescopes or any other device using eclipse glasses or handheld filters. The sun will

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burn through them and damage your eyes. There are special filters that can be attached to the front of these pieces of equipment if you choose to watch the eclipse that way.

Other safe ways to witness this unique natural event is through indirect methods:

- Making a pinhole viewer
- View a livestream of the eclipse on TV, Computer, etc.

For people that did not have enough time to find or order eclipse glasses, or recommended solar filters please consider watching the eclipse indoors online or a live television broadcast.

For schools, daycares or other congregate settings caring for vulnerable populations, events can be planned indoors at gymnasiums, classrooms, cafeterias, etc. ensuring the safety of those under their care.

Plan Ahead to Safely Watch the Solar Eclipse:

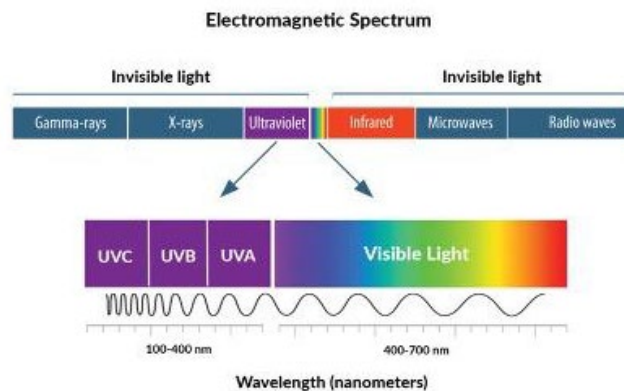
- Carefully inspect your solar filter or eclipse glasses before using them. If you see any scratches or damage, do not use them.
- Always read and follow all directions that come with the solar filter or eclipse glasses. Help children to be sure they use handheld solar viewers and eclipse glasses correctly.
- Before looking up at the bright sun, stand still and cover your eyes with your eclipse glasses or solar viewer. After glancing at the sun, turn away and remove your filter—do not remove it while looking at the sun.

RESOURCES:

[Safe Solar Eclipse Viewing - Infographic - American Academy of Ophthalmology \(aao.org\)](#)

[Protect against eye damage from April 8's solar eclipse, doctors say : Shots - Health News : NPR](#)

[How to watch an eclipse, safely | National Eye Institute \(nih.gov\)](#)



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