

## Tanning Beds

Tanning beds produce high levels of ultraviolet (UV) light, which can tan the skin but can also burn the cornea, the clear covering of the eye. You do not feel the burn until 6 to 12 hours after exposure, so you can suffer a severe corneal burn without realizing it while tanning or immediately after. UV light can also cause cataracts and can be a factor in the development of macular degeneration.

As they say, an ounce of protection is worth a pound of cure, so always wear special protective eyewear while using a tanning bed. Closing your eyes, wearing regular sunglasses, and placing cotton pads on your eyelids *do not* protect your corneas from the intense UV radiation produced by tanning devices.

Tanning facilities are required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to provide safety goggles, but it is best to obtain your own pair so you will always be prepared. Make sure your goggles fit snugly, cover your eyes properly, and are completely opaque. If you use the salon's goggles, be sure that the salon personnel sterilize them after each use to prevent infection and that the goggles are approved for this particular use.

Since the skin does not usually get burned from tanning devices, most people do not realize the potential damage to their eyes. If you experience any eye pain after UV exposure, contact your ophthalmologist (Eye M.D.).