

1008 Wawaset Rd., Kennett Square, PA 19348

THE DANGERS OF SUNGAZING

I hope everyone enjoyed the Great American Eclipse in August and wore proper eclipse glasses or used a pinhole viewer to observe the amazing sight! You cannot gaze directly at the sun even through sunglasses, a telescope or a camera, and this article will tell you why.

The rays of the sun are very powerful and your eye is set up like a magnifying glass. The cornea and lens focus light rays very sharply to one point in the middle of your retina, the fovea. Just like one is able to use a magnifying glass to burn a hole in paper with the sun's rays, so will this happen to your retina. The sun burns a hole in the center of your vision called solar retinopathy.

In solar retinopathy, the rods and cones are damaged as well as the cells that nourish them. The younger you are, the clearer your lens so the more susceptible you are to damage. You also are more susceptible if you have no glasses on or have dilated pupils (like from drug use). This retinopathy is also what happens when you stare at a laser pointer or a welding arc.

If you briefly stare at the sun or light source, sometimes the retina is just swollen and can recover in 3-6 months. However, if it is burned, the damage is permanent and there is no treatment. The best approach is prevention.

The only way to view the sun is either through a pinhole viewer, eclipse glasses bearing the label ISO 12312-2 that are sold through a reputable site listed on the American Astronomical Society website, or through a welding mask shade 12 or darker.

EYE TO EYE FOCUS

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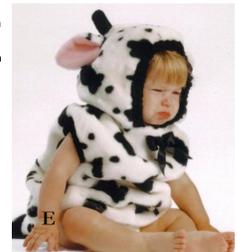
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eclipse2017.nasa.gov/safety

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