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# Here comes the sun! Where are your shades?

## UV rays can damage your eyes — but new technology comes to the rescue

**By Paul Hochman**

TODAYShow.com contributor  
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Welcome to sunny April, fearless readers, and to the following scary fact: Researchers have shown that you can get sunburned many times faster in 2008 you would have 50 years ago. Importantly, and while most people don't realize it, your eyes can get sunburned, too, causing cataracts, skin cancer, even macular degeneration which can lead to blindness. Children's eyes are especially vulnerable to the sun's damage.

Before we show you the latest lens technology that can protect you and your family's eyes, there are a few basic rules:

### Dark colors do not guarantee protection.

Dark glasses do not necessarily protect your eyes from the sun's damaging UVA and UVB rays. In fact, dark lenses cause your pupils to dilate; so if those stylish specs you're wearing



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don't have the proper material in them to protect against UVA/UVB rays (it will say so on the glasses





**Paul Hochman**  
TODAY gear and technology editor

in the store), they'll actually be letting in more damaging rays, not fewer. Get lenses that block at least 95 percent of UVA and UVB rays.

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**It's the material – not the tint – that protects your eyes.**

According to ophthalmologists at the Mayo Clinic, lenses made of polycarbonate block virtually 100 percent of the sun's UVA and UVB rays, even if the lenses are clear. That's right — clear polycarbonate blocks all of the sun's UVA and UVB rays. You'll want them to be tinted to make bright days comfortable, but again, it's not the tint that protects you, it's the material. Advantages: Polycarbonate is light and literally bulletproof. Drawback: Polycarbonate is easy to scratch relative to glass.

**Try lenses with photochromics.**

Photochromics are molecules that darken when UV rays hit them. They're often placed on the surface of a lens or in between two lens layers. Lenses with photochromics have this advantage over polycarbonate: They don't distort color, making it easier to see accurately and putting less strain on your eyes. Drawback: Photochromic molecules can "age" (darkening more slowly, or eventually not at all, and become less effective over time).

Luckily, one company is introducing a lens technology that offers all of the advantages of the lens types above, with almost none of the disadvantages.

The California eyewear maker is called 7eye (www.7eye.com), named after the visible spectrum's seven colors — red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. Using lens technology designed in Parma, Italy, 7eye has just introduced a line of glasses that block all of the sun's harmful rays using photochromics, but which are also more scratch resistant than polycarbonate ... and still bulletproof. They're even used by NASCAR driver Bobby Hamilton.

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The 7eye's lens technology is called NXT. It's made of polyurethane, not polycarbonate. What's the difference? Polyurethane can be molded at much lower temperatures than polycarbonate. The photochromic molecules that would be destroyed if poured into polycarbonate during the hotter molding process can be poured directly into the cooler polyurethane. The result: The 7eye's photochromics last much longer, because they're literally mixed into the lens, instead of sitting vulnerable in a layer on the top.

7eye also has a special lens construction called Amplified Color Technology which filters and separates primary colors, making objects seem clearer, even in lower light. The company promises that ACT will improve your depth perception and making your brain work less to try to differentiate colors.

And finally, 7eye has even created a so-called "eyecup" system in some of their glasses that blocks light from the side and even reduces dust infiltration.

Anything that can make my brain work less and protect my eyes in the bargain is alright with me. Happy spring ...

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*Paul Hochman is the gear and technology editor for the TODAY Show and a "Fast Company" magazine contributor. He covered the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Athens and Torino, Italy, for TODAY. He was also a three-year letter winner on the Dartmouth ski team and has a black belt in karate. Paul's blog can be found at: [Paulhochman.blogspot.com](http://Paulhochman.blogspot.com)*

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