



SAFETY TOPIC: WHY WEAR SUNGLASSES?

When I was 15 in driver's education I remember the instructor asking us why motorcyclists wore leather...was it to look cool? The answer was it was the best protection for them. So why is it important for you to wear sunglasses when you ride?

In addition to protecting eyes from dirt, dust and a laundry list of projectiles, sunglasses are the best way to ensure that you won't suffer from cataracts, keratitis and other eye ailments caused by UV radiation. Studies have shown that the risk of cataracts, a gradual clouding of the lens of the eye that can lead to total blindness, is tripled by long-term exposure to the sun's UV (ultraviolet) rays. A secondary solar threat the sun's heat, can dry out the eyes, cause eye fatigue and perhaps accelerate the negative effects of UV exposure.



When looking for sunglasses that will offer protection while cycling and other outdoor activities there are several key points to consider when selecting a pair for cycling:

- **Lens Color:** For the best protection, you'll want to block out 75 to 90 percent of visible light in bright sun, 35 to 50 percent on dull days.
- Look for a tag indicating light-absorption qualities, or the opposite, their transmission factor.
 - Several brands of glasses allow of changing out of lenses to allow for environmental conditions.
- The best color to choose for all-around use is neutral gray because it doesn't distort color, though brown is OK, too.
- **Ultraviolet Radiation (UV):** Almost all quality sunglasses produced today offer essential protection against ultraviolet (UVA and UVB) radiation.
 - Some lens materials have a built-in ability to absorb U/V light, but most protection is added in the form of lens coatings.
 - Most U/V on its way from the sun to earth is absorbed by the upper and ozone layers of the atmosphere and is diffused further by the time it reaches sea level.
- **Shields or wraparound frames:** Wraparound-type frames and lenses offer several advantages for cyclists. Wraparounds allow the best peripheral (side) vision, thanks to the lack of obstruction by the frame and temple. Peripheral vision is especially important for maneuvering safety in a group of riders and in traffic.
 - Wraparounds also help keep drying wind off the eyes, while allowing enough air circulation to prevent fogging of the lenses.
 - Wraparound lenses that extend higher above the eyebrow allow unobstructed vision when riding low on the drops.