



News Anchor Anderson Cooper Had Photokeratitis ... Have YOU?

By Brenda Fishbaugh

Yep, it happens to the rich and famous, too. Anderson Cooper, the fair-skinned, TV Emmy award-winning journalist and star of CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360*, discussed the horrible pain he experienced when he burned his eyeball – an injury called *photokeratitis*. No, Anderson Cooper had not used a tanning bed. He was in Portugal on a boat for two hours, working on a news story. The glare from the ocean caused him to be “blind for 36 hours.” Clearly the intense UV light reflected off the water and burned his cornea.

He recounted the ordeal on the air: “I wake up in the middle of the night and it feels like my eyes are on fire, my eyeballs, and I think, oh maybe I have sand in my eyes or something. I douse my eyes with water. Anyway, it turns out I have sunburned my eyeballs,” he said on *Anderson Live*. “I had no idea you could do this.”

Anderson, you can easily burn your eyeball! The eye does not have any melanin cells to produce a tan when exposed to ultraviolet light, so when the cornea burns, it feels like sand in your eyes. But that grainy feeling isn't sand; it is your cornea peeling!

Other symptoms of photokeratitis (or “snow blindness”) can include vision that is mildly to severely blurred, says Fraser Horn, Associate Dean for Academic Programs at the Pacific University College of Optometry, Forest Grove, Oregon. In addition, your eyes may be red, itchy and watery. The painful effects are temporary, much like sunburn on your skin.

But you can avoid the pain – and also lower your long-term risk for developing cataracts and skin cancer on your eyelids – by wearing sunglasses that block at least 99% UVA and UVB whenever you're outside, says New York dermatologist Deborah Sarnoff, Senior Vice President of the Skin Cancer Foundation.

And, yes, photokeratitis happens often to your salon guests who don't wear their FDA-compliant eye protection during their UV sessions. Every year, for decades, eye burns have been the No. 1 reason tanners get medical attention after using a tanning bed. And it is completely preventable!

Get your tanners into the habit of wearing either disposable eye protection or their own goggles during every single session. There are so many fun eye protection designs and styles ... let's ELIMINATE this category

of complaints about indoor tanning that people make to the FDA! Protect your tanners! Encourage sunglasses outdoors and insist that your guests wear FDA-compliant eye protection. ■

As a thank you for reading my column, we'll send you a free pair of UV Block sunglasses for outdoor use. Just email your U.S. salon mailing address to Brenda@WinkEase.com and tell me how you and your team encourage your salon guests to protect their eyes.



About the Author:

Tanning industry veteran Brenda Fishbaugh is president of Eye Pro, Inc., makers of disposable eyewear. She travels

extensively training salons on the effects of UV light on vision.

