

March 19, 2024

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

On April 8, 2024, parts of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, and parts of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, as well as City of Cornwall and Akwesasne will experience a total solar eclipse. The areas of the Counties outside the path of totality, as well as Lanark County and the United Counties of Prescott and Russell will experience a partial eclipse. The eclipse will take place from approximately 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. that day. During this time, the moon will move between the sun and the Earth and cast a shadow on the Earth's surface. When the sun is completely blocked by the moon, this is referred to as "totality". While this will be a great historic event and learning opportunity, there is cause for public health concern.

It is dangerous to look directly at the sun at any time, but during an eclipse it can be very tempting to have a quick look. Even though some of the sunlight is blocked by the moon, the remaining light can still damage unprotected eyes. Viewing the sun with your naked eye during the eclipse can burn your retina, damaging the images your brain can view. There are no pain sensors in your retinas to indicate that your eyes are being damaged. Symptoms can take 12 to 48 hours to appear and can include retinal burns, permanent or temporary visual loss, and blurred vision. Once symptoms begin, it is usually too late to reverse any damage. This is why prevention and protection for your eyes is very important. It is critical to take precautions to protect your eyes between 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on April 8, even if you are in an area that isn't in the path of totality.

Staying inside is the best way to prevent harm to your eyes. Consider closing your blinds and curtains to avoid accidentally looking at the sun through a window, particularly if you have children at home. If you don't want to miss out, here are a few ways to view the eclipse indirectly:

- Live streaming. There will be a virtual viewing through [NASA's website](#).
- Pinhole projectors. Light is allowed through a small-punched hole, which then projects the incoming light onto the opposite end of the box. To learn how to make a projector, and for other activity ideas visit the [Queen's University website](#).

If you choose to view the eclipse, here are ways to protect your eyes (retinas):

- Use eclipse glasses from a [reputable vendor](#) that are ISO-certified and meet the ISO 12312-2 international safety standard. The manufacturer's name and address must be printed on the product.
- Ensure that eclipse glasses fully cover your field of vision.
- Put on glasses when looking away from the Sun, then look at the eclipse. Look away from the Sun before taking glasses off.
- Be careful of anyone trying to offer viewing devices that are not certified.
- Do not use any viewer if it has scratched or wrinkled lenses.
- Do not use:
 - Ordinary sunglasses or multiple pairs of sunglasses.
 - Neutral density or polarizing filters, such as those made for camera lenses.
 - Smoked glass.
 - Photographic or X-ray film (unexposed, exposed or developed).
 - Binoculars or telescope – even with certified glasses.
 - Potato-chip bags, DVDs, and any other do-it-yourself filters.
- Monitor children closely during the eclipse, particularly young children, to make sure they don't look at the sun without proper eye protection.

Take extra care if driving during the eclipse. From about 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., the eclipse will affect daylight as it progresses. Exact times will depend on the viewer's precise location. The following traffic safety messaging are recommended:

- Don't stop on the shoulder of the road
- Don't take photographs while driving
- Turn on your headlights
- Watch out for pedestrians

For more information about eye safety and proper viewing devices during the eclipse, visit [Total Solar Eclipse 2024 - Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit](#) or [Total Solar Eclipse 2024 – Eastern Ontario Health Unit](#).

If you require medical assistance because of a risk of exposure, call Health811 or visit [East Region Virtual Care Clinic | Virtual Care in Ontario's East Region \(virtualcareontario.ca\)](#). If you are experiencing blindness after viewing the eclipse (immediate or delayed), seek emergency care immediately.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:
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