

On August 21, a once in a lifetime total solar eclipse will take place within a 70 mile path in Kentucky which includes Hopkinsville, Paducah and the Land between the Lakes.

The Kentucky Department for Public Health wants to make sure you take precautions to protect your eyes and your health.

DON'T LOOK AT THE SUN ONCE THE ECLIPSE STARTS AND DON'T LOOK AT THE SUN THROUGH YOUR SUNGLASSES – THAT IS NOT SAFE FOR YOUR EYES.

The preferred equipment is of course, eclipse glasses – made with special filters to protect your eyes from the sun's harmful rays. Be sure they meet international standards.

Welder's goggles can also work, if they contain #14 welder's glass.

If you do not have either of those, there are other safe ways to watch the eclipse. The simplest and cheapest way is projection. You can use a pinhole in a small opening in a piece of cardboard to project the image of the eclipsed sun onto a white piece of cardboard. Holding it about two feet away, you can see the shadow of the moon passing over the round image of the sun.

Another fun way is to use a pasta colander projected on a piece of white cardboard. Anything with tiny holes can project the partially eclipsed sun's image.

Once the eclipse is total – when the moon completely covers the sun, you can look at it with the naked eye, but only until it starts to move, then look away, and use your equipment or techniques.

Important points:

- The partial eclipse before the total lasts for about an hour. Use safety measures during this time.
- The total eclipse, when the moon completely covers the sun, can be seen unaided.
- Then safety measure are necessary to watch the partial eclipse after the total, which again, can last for about an hour.
- Do not look at the partial eclipse through an unfiltered camera, telescope, binoculars, or any other optical device.
- For more information on eclipse viewing, go to eclipse2017.nasa.gov.

In addition to eye safety, state health officials also recommend an "Eclipse Safety Kit" that includes these items:

Sunscreen - The total eclipse lasts only a couple of minutes, however the partial eclipse leading up to and after can be up to two hours. That is a lot of sun in the August heat – protect your face, hands and other exposed areas of the body from the sun.

Water - You will need to drink water before you get thirsty. This is especially true for people 65 and older who have a decreased ability to respond to external temperature changes.

Wipes, tissues, and hand sanitizers - There may not be available facilities to clean your hands before eating or after using those ever-present porta –potties. You just want to be ready.

Insect Repellent – Be sure to use an EPA-approved insect repellent and always follow directions and re apply as directed. Remember, there is still a threat of the Zika virus during the summer months.

Antibacterial ointment - In the event of an insect bite, or scratch, it should be applied immediately.

All of these items should be part of your Eclipse Kit. Have fun and be safe.