

HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SOLAR ECLIPSE ON APRIL 8, 2024

April 5, 2024

Dear Parents / Guardians:

I am writing this letter as a follow-up and general reminder to all families that schools, centres and daycare services will be closed on Monday, April 8th. This decision was taken to minimize the risks to student safety associated with the solar eclipse that will take place that afternoon.

Included below, you will find information from the Government of Quebec on the potential damage to the eye if exposed to a solar eclipse without adequate protection. We have included information below on various ways the solar eclipse can safely be experienced.

GENERAL INFORMATION

A total eclipse of the sun will take place on the afternoon of April 8, 2024, in Quebec. This is a very rare astronomical phenomenon in which the moon moves directly between the earth and the sun, completely hiding the sun for a short period of time. The entire event will start at approximately 2:10 pm and end at approximately 4:40 pm, varying slightly depending on one's location.

- Direct observation of the sun should be avoided at all times, as it can cause damage to the eye, even with conventional sun protection such as sunglasses or contact lenses. This risk is heightened during an eclipse when the sun's reduced luminosity diminishes the eye's protective reflex.
- The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) reminds us not to observe the solar eclipse with the naked eye **throughout its entire duration**. However, the closer you get to totality, which **begins at 3:25 p.m. at the earliest and ends at 3:40 p.m. at the latest** depending on your location, the greater the risk.
- If the appropriate protective measures are not taken, watching a solar eclipse, even for a few seconds, can have harmful effects on health, including potentially irreversible loss of vision.
- Those who still wish to watch the eclipse are invited to do so with the necessary precautions and adequate means of protection. Indirect methods are to be preferred, as they are less risky than direct observation.
- To minimize the visual consequences associated with this activity, it is essential to rigorously follow all recommendations.



- In the event of visual disturbance following direct observation of the eclipse, we recommend that you consult an eye care professional immediately.

Indirect observation of an eclipse

- There are a number of safe and inexpensive options for indirect viewing of the solar eclipse, i.e., without looking directly at the sun:
 - use of a [solar eclipse box](#), which lets you observe a small image of the sun through a closed box;
 - shadow viewing: sunlight passing through an aperture, projects the image of the eclipse onto the ground. To ensure safe viewing, keep your back to the sun at all times. You can, for example, cross the fingers of one hand over those of the other and look at the ground. The spaces between the fingers will project several small crescents during the partial phases and rings during the totality phase. You can also use everyday objects, such as perforated cardboard;
 - watching on the websites of several organizations that will be broadcasting the eclipse live, including the [Parc national du Mont-Mégantic Astrolab](#).

Direct observation of an eclipse

- People who choose to observe the eclipse directly must protect their eyes at all times by using approved solar eclipse glasses that meet the international ISO 12312-2 standard. It's also important to ensure that lenses and frames are undamaged before use. Eclipse glasses should come from reliable suppliers, either directly from the manufacturer or from a recognized distributor.
- Sunglasses, even good quality ones with a very dark tint, **are not sufficient protection** in this context.
- Supervision should be in place for all children as well as for youth and adults who may have difficulty ensuring their own safety.
- It is important to remember that one should never look at the sun without specially designed eclipse glasses. It should be noted that when putting on or taking off the glasses, people must avoid accidentally looking at the sun.

Further information

- During a solar eclipse, the many mechanisms that normally protect the eyes (i.e. instinctively averting your gaze, reflex eyelid closure, tearing up) are reduced or absent, since the sun's light output is lower. However, since solar radiation is just as intense, it can damage the eye's retina, causing permanent vision problems.
- As the retina has no sensitivity receptors, no pain is felt in the eyes during harmful exposure.
- Ophthalmological risks involved include:
 - **Retinal Lesions:** These cause no pain on exposure but can be permanent. Following significant exposure, a macular hole may appear and remain in the middle of the person's field of vision. This creates a permanently blurred or dark spot in the middle of the field of vision. This reduction in vision will then occur with a delay, i.e., several hours after the sun has been observed.
 - **Corneal Lesions:** These painful lesions lead to a sharp drop in visual acuity and intolerance to light.

For more information, please consult the following website:

[Preparing for the solar eclipse on April 8, 2024 in Québec | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](https://www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/fr/actualites/2024/04/08/preparez-vous-pour-le-eclipsage-du-soleil-le-8-avril-2024)

Sincerely,



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