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Optometrists suggest caution

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Back in 1979, people in the U.S. were astounded by the sight of a solar eclipse. Now, in less than a week, the U.S. will again be able to behold the phenomenon.

“The eclipse is a rare moment that the whole country is able to share,” Dr. Ryan Farrar of Jury, Farrar and Associates in Liberal said in a press release. “As America’s primary eye health and vision care experts, doctors of optometry are excited to help everyone enjoy it safely by protecting their eyes.”

The eclipse will be making its way across the country Monday, and millions in the U.S. will be able to see either the full eclipse or a partial eclipse.

“Within the path of totality, you can safely witness the two or more minutes when the moon completely covers the sun with the naked eye,” Farrar noted. “Otherwise, your eyes should always be protected by verified viewing tools. Never look directly at the sun without eye protection, even briefly.”

The association also advised knowing the duration of the eclipse over the viewer’s specific area.

“Outside of the path of totality, always use solar filters. O.D.s want to re-inforce that the only safe way to look directly at the uneclipsed or partially eclipsed sun is through special-purpose solar filters or other ISO-certified filters, such as “eclipse glasses” or handheld solar viewers,” Farrar noted. “The AOA encourages ordering solar eclipse glasses in advance and recommends referring to the American Astronomical Society’s site for a list of manufacturers.”

The offices of Jury, Farrar and Associates are offering a free pair of eclipse glasses to customers, and Farrar offered encouragement to visit the office. Farrar warned, however, supplies of the spectacles are limited.

For those who wish to properly view the spectacle, the proper pair of spectacles are required, and the American Optometric Association (AOA) offered some final tips for safely viewing the eclipse.

“If you stare at the sun without protection, you may experience damage to your retina (the tissue at the back of your eye) called ‘solar retinopathy.’” Farrar noted. “This damage can occur without any sensation of pain, since the retina does not have pain receptors. The injury can be temporary or permanent. Visit your local doctor of optometry immediately if an accident occurs.”