The Dangers of Night Driving Glasses
By Keith Benjamin

It is an all too common misconception that yellow tinted or yellow polarized night driving glasses are beneficial for night time driving. The thought is, the yellow or amber color reduces glare and improves contrast. However, in reality, when driving at night or dusk in already limited lighting conditions, ANY tint further reduces the amount of light transmitted to the eye, and consequently, further impairs vision. The problem is compounded as the yellow tint gives the wearer the impression they are seeing better, when in fact the reverse is actually true.

"Yellow ‘Night Driving’ lenses have been shown to provide no benefit in seeing ability at night. They are even hazardous, because they give the driver a feeling of seeing better, which no one has yet been able to explain. Studies have shown that they actually impair visual performance and retard glare recovery. Many promoters have made unfounded claims for the ability of amber to improve night vision. They have employed mass solicitation, usually by mail. The Federal Trade Commission has correctly ruled that “such practices are illegal since the lenses do not perform as claimed.” - *Forensic Aspects of Vision and Highway Safety*, Merrill J. Allen, O.D., Ph.D., Et al.

While yellow lenses can be effective for foggy or hazy daylight conditions, they are not effective against headlight glare and should not be worn at dusk or night. If glare from headlights is a problem, the first step should be a thorough eye examination, as this could be an early indication of cataracts or other medical conditions.

"So-called night driving glasses are generally amber tinted eyewear meant to reduce the glare of oncoming headlights. While they may make the driver feel more comfortable, they also reduce the wearers visibility of the darker portions of the roadway." - Sunglass Association of America.

The best option for night time driving is a pair of spectacles with clear lenses and an AR coating. The AR coating is beneficial in two ways. First, it minimizes internal reflections within the lenses, reducing halo problems, and second, it increases the transmittance of light through the lens to the eye. However, it is important to note, if a patient does not normally wear spectacles, AR coated lenses, or any other type of night driving glasses will not improve night vision, as AR coatings only minimize aberrations that are inherent in ophthalmic lenses and night driving glasses will simply serve to introduce those aberrations to the wearer's vision.

Tips for optimal night time driving vision:
- Make sure eyes are examined regularly
- Always wear an up-to-date prescription
- Lenses worn should be clear with an AR coating
- Ensure lenses are clean
- Ensure windshield is clean