How too much sun exposure can give you skin cancer on your eyeball.
When Joanne Hill popped into Boots for a routine eye-test, she thought she might finally need to give in to middle age and start wearing glasses. At 42, she had been suffering from 'tired eyes' for several weeks.
But rather than being given a prescription for spectacles, she found herself being referred for urgent tests. Her optician had noticed a strange shadow in the bottom corner of her right eye.
Initially, a shocked Joanne was advised it could be something as straightforward as a freckle on the eyeball - which many of us develop as a result of normal exposure to sunlight. Or, although this was unlikely, it could be cancer.
'I was stunned. I wasn't ill and I didn't feel unwell,' says the engineer from Todmorden, West Yorkshire.
'Like most people I wasn't aware you could get freckles on your eyes, never mind skin cancer. It was all a bit confusing.'
She was sent to the eye unit at Warrington Hospital for tests, and doctors told her she had an ocular melanoma (a mole) on her retina and that it could be malignant.
'They said it was a mole, just like one you'd find on any other part of the body,' she says. 'If it had been on my arm, they would have told me to keep a look out for any changes myself - but because it was on the eye, they would have to do that for me. My “tired eyes” were nothing to do with it.'
The team took photographs of the mole using a specialist camera and referred Joanne for a check-up six months later at the Ocular Oncology Unit in Liverpool Hospital - one of only a few specialist eye-cancer teams in the UK.
'That's when they discovered it had changed and was malignant,' Joanne explains. 'I still had no symptoms and the cancer couldn't be seen without specialist equipment, but it was definitely cancerous. It came as a massive shock because I was so fit and healthy - I played sport a few times a week and cycled to work every day.
'When the doctors said they wanted to start treatment the next day I realized how serious it was.'
Those most at risk of ocular melanomas are people with red hair and fair skin, sunbed users or anyone exposed to large amounts of UV light. The over-50s are most commonly affected. But none of these risk factors applied to Joanne.