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Protecting Eyes from Ultraviolet Rays Today Can Help Save Sight in the Future

Prevent Blindness Declares May as Ultraviolet (UV) Awareness Month to Educate Public on Dangers of Extended UV Exposure

CHICAGO (April 27, 2017) – Many people know about the damage that ultraviolet (UV) rays can have on the skin, from sunburns to skin cancers. But many may not know about the damage it may cause to the eyes. That is why [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation's oldest eye health and safety organization, has declared May as UV (ultraviolet) Awareness Month. The goal is to help educate the public on the dangers of UV and steps to take to protect vision today and in the future.

UV damage to the eyes can be immediate including a condition called “ultraviolet keratitis.” According to the [Cleveland Clinic](#), this occurs from exposure to ultraviolet rays that can temporarily damage the cornea (the clear portion of the eye in front of the pupil) and the conjunctiva, a layer of cells covering the inside of the eyelid and the whites of the eye. Symptoms, such as eye pain, tears, blurred vision, light sensitivity and seeing halos, may last from 6 to 24 hours, but they usually disappear within 48 hours.

However, some UV damage may be cumulative, leading to cataract or macular degeneration later in life. People who work or play in the sun for long periods of time are at the greatest risk. Parents should make sure that all children are wearing the proper sun protection at all times when outdoors.

When purchasing sunglasses, Prevent Blindness [also recommends](#) buying sunglasses that:

- reduce glare
- block 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B rays
- are comfortable to wear
- do not distort colors
- are safe for outdoor activities, such as sports

Sunglasses should be worn in conjunction with a brimmed hat. Wrap-around sunglasses are best as they protect not only the eyes but the delicate skin around the eyes as well.

“The best way to protect your eyes, and your family’s eyes from UV, is to talk with an eyecare professional. By discussing your unique needs, he or she can provide guidance on the best ways to protect your eyes today and help ensure healthy vision for years to come,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness.

For more information on the dangers of UV exposure and how to choose the best UV protection, please visit the Prevent Blindness dedicated Web page at <http://www.preventblindness.org/protect-your-eyes-sun> or call (800) 331-2020.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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