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This Summer Keep an Eye on UV Safety

American Academy of Ophthalmology offers tips for safe fun in the sun

SAN FRANCISCO – July is UV (ultraviolet light) Safety Month, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology reminds Americans of the importance of protecting their eyes from the sun's harmful rays by wearing sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats.

One of the greatest threats to your eyes is invisible. Studies show that exposure to bright sunlight may increase the risk of developing cataracts, age-related macular degeneration and growths on the eye, including cancer.

"I see many patients with lesions and growths that are triggered by exposure to UV light," said Lee Duffner, MD, an ophthalmologist in Florida and clinical correspondent for the Academy. "Many of these growths require surgical removal."

The longer the exposure to bright light, the greater the risk is. Excessive exposure to UV light reflected off sand, snow, water or pavement can damage the eyes' front surface. Like your skin, your eyes never recover from UV exposure.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology offers these tips to protect your eyes from the sun:

- **Don't focus on color or darkness of sunglass lenses:** Select sunglasses that block UV rays. Don't be deceived by color or cost. The ability to block UV light is not dependent on the price tag.
- **Check for 97-100% UV protection:** Make sure your sunglasses block 97 to 100 percent of UV rays and UV-B rays.
- **Choose wrap-around styles:** Ideally, your sunglasses should wrap all the way around to your temples, so the sun's rays can't enter from the side.
- **Wear a hat:** In addition to your sunglasses, wear a broad-brimmed hat to protect your eyes.
- **Don't rely on contact lenses:** Even if you wear contact lenses with UV protection, remember your sunglasses.
- **Don't be fooled by clouds:** The sun's rays can pass through haze and thin clouds. Sun damage to eyes can occur anytime during the year, not just in the summertime.
- **Protect your eyes during peak sun times:** Sunglasses should be worn whenever outside and it's especially important to wear sunglasses in the early afternoon and at higher altitudes, where UV light is more intense.
- **Don't forget the kids:** Everyone is at risk, including children. Protect their eyes with hats and sunglasses. In addition, try to keep children out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's UV rays are the strongest.

About the American Academy of Ophthalmology

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons—Eye M.D.s—with more than 27,000 members worldwide. Eye health care is provided by the three “O’s” – opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. It is the ophthalmologist, or Eye M.D., who can treat it all: eye diseases and injuries, and perform eye surgery. To find an Eye M.D. in your area, visit the Academy's Web site at www.aao.org.

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