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Ophthalmologists Issue New Recommendation in Effort to Prevent Eye Injuries at Home

*Nearly half of all eye injuries now happening in the home
Two new surveys highlight disconnect between reality and perception of eye injury risks.*

SAN FRANCISCO – What do a bungee cord, a pan of frying bacon and lawn-care chemicals have in common? They are just a few of the common items around the house that can cause eye injuries, which a new study from the American Academy of Ophthalmology (Academy) and the American Society of Ocular Trauma (ASOT) reports are increasingly occurring at home. The new Eye Injury Snapshot, a clinical survey of eye injuries across the U.S., found that nearly half of the 2.5 million eye injuries that Americans suffer annually now happen in and around the home in common places like the lawn, garden, kitchen or garage.

In an effort to combat the rate of household eye injuries, the Academy and ASOT today issued a new recommendation that every household in America have at least one pair of ANSI-approved* protective eyewear to be worn when doing projects and activities at home to safeguard against eye injuries.

The recommendation from the Academy and ASOT comes as a new companion survey conducted on behalf of the Academy's EyeSmart™ Campaign underscores the disconnect between the reality of eye injury risks and people's perception of that risk. Most Americans think that eye injuries are a workplace phenomenon or related to events like Fourth of July fireworks displays. In fact, Americans are more likely to be injured in their homes from common everyday activities like mowing the lawn, cooking, cleaning and do-it-yourself home improvement projects that impact both participants and bystanders.

“Preventing an eye injury is much easier than treating one,” said H. Dunbar Hoskins, Jr., MD, executive vice president of the Academy. “Ninety percent of all eye injuries can be prevented by simply wearing protective eyewear. As the Fourth of July approaches,

people are aware of the threat to the eyes that fireworks can represent, but they need to be equally aware of the everyday dangers that lurk in the home.”

The first of the two surveys, called the Eye Injury Snapshot (EIS), was conducted by the Academy, ASOT and 12 subspecialty societies. EIS presents a clinical “moment in time,” looking at eye injuries treated in the United States by ophthalmologists, emergency room physicians and pediatricians during a one-week period. This marks the fifth year of the EIS. In 2008, there were 775 cases reported from all parts of the country. The survey found that:

- Nearly half of all eye injuries occur at home, with more than 40 percent happening during everyday activities like cooking, home repairs or yard work
- Men were more likely to be injured (74 percent) than women (26 percent)
- 78 percent of eye injuries occurred to individuals who were not wearing protective eyewear during the time of the injury.
- Nearly half of all injuries were to individuals between the ages of 18 and 45.
- Around the home, the majority of eye injuries occurred in the yard (39.4 percent), garage (11.8) and workshop (8.1 percent). Yet in-home locations, such as the kitchen, family room, bedroom and bathroom were also significant areas prone to injury, accounting for more than 34 percent of all eye injuries reported.

The companion public survey designed to measure Americans’ understanding of eye injuries found that most underestimate the risks of home eye injury, believing more eye injuries occur outside the home, such as at a construction site or factory or at special events such as Fourth of July fireworks. Fewer than one in five Americans believes that he or she is at even a moderate risk of eye injuries.

“Slipping on a pair of safety glasses is quick and easy. Unfortunately, compared to other common-sense safety steps, such as wearing seatbelts, using protective eyewear does not happen frequently enough,” said Ferenc Kuhn, MD, PhD, president of ASOT. “Sadly, the risk is not just confined to people doing the projects. Bystanders can also be injured and should take precautions against eye injuries as well.”

The EyeSmart public opinion survey, conducted by Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research, also found that:

- Only 35 percent of Americans report that they always wear protective eyewear when performing home repairs or maintenance.
- Two-thirds of respondents said they own protective eyewear, but, of that group, 30 percent do not consistently wear the eye protection when doing home repairs or projects.

- Thirty-seven percent of those surveyed never or rarely wear protective lenses for repairs or maintenance, and nearly half (48 percent) report never wearing eyewear when playing sports.

“People seem to understand that you need safety glasses when using power tools, but the threat to your eyesight lurks even in basic home repairs and cleaning,” Dr. Hoskins said. “People should use protective eyewear during any potentially hazardous tasks around the house, from cleaning your oven with a chemical cleaner to using bungee cords to hold items in place. In the event that you do suffer an eye injury, have an ophthalmologist examine the injury as soon as possible, even if the injury seems minor at first.”

The landscape of eye injuries in America has changed significantly since the 1990s, when the majority of eye injuries occurred in workplace settings. Today, due in part to improved safety measures, workplace injuries have fallen off, while a growing do-it-yourself attitude for home projects and increased falls among aging baby boomers may partially explain the increase in household injuries. Of the 2.5 million Americans who suffer from eye injuries each year, 50,000 experience significant vision loss from these injuries.

Today’s announcement kick-offs a multi-year effort to curb eye injuries and is part of the Academy’s EyeSmart public awareness campaign to empower Americans to take charge of their eye health and to educate them about eye diseases, injuries and infections. The Academy is partnering with EyeCare America[®], a public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, on the effort. Additional information regarding eye injury prevention and treatment as well as executive summaries of both surveys can be found at www.geteyesmart.org.

About the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Society of Ocular Trauma

The Academy is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons - Eye M.D.s - with more than 27,000 members worldwide. Eye healthcare is provided by three sources - 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.

The American Society of Ocular Trauma (ASOT) promotes ocular trauma prevention, treatment and rehabilitation through education, research and United States Eye Injury Registry (USEIR) surveillance. ASOT maintains the USEIR, the world’s largest surveillance system for serious eye injuries. For more information, please visit www.asotonline.org

*ANSI-approved protective eyewear is manufactured to meet the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) eye protection standard. ANSI-approved protective eye wear can be easily purchased from most hardware stores nationwide and can be identified by the mark "Z87" placed on the eye wear. ANSI-approved protective eyewear is not approved for use in sports. To locate appropriate eyewear for specific sports talk to your ophthalmologist or visit www.geteyesmart.org.

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Eye Injuries: Recent Data and Trends in the United States

Introduction:

Eye injury is a significant health problem in the United States, second only to cataract as a cause of visual impairment. Each year more than 2.5 million eye injuries occur and 50,000 people permanently lose part or all of their vision. **Ninety percent (90%) of all eye injuries can be prevented by using protective eyewear.**

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (Academy) and the American Society of Ocular Trauma (ASOT) track eye injuries annually through an effort called Eye Injury Snapshot (EIS), part of the EyeSmart™ Campaign to raise awareness of eye disease, eye injury and eye infection. Ophthalmologists, pediatricians and emergency room doctors from all regions of the United States report on the eye injuries they treat during a one-week period of time, the “snapshot” period. The EIS data presented here were averaged from the 2004–2008 snapshot periods. This information is also consistent with longer-term trend data compiled by the United States Eye Injury Registry. In this backgrounder EIS facts are compared with American perceptions about eye injuries identified in a recent public survey by Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research for the Academy and ASOT.

Who is at greatest risk for an eye injury?

The Facts:

- Adults: Nearly half (47.6 percent) of all reported eye injuries occur in people between the ages of 18 and 45
- Children: 25.4 percent of injuries occur in children and youth 0 to 18 years old
- Older Adults: 26.9 percent of injuries occur in people age 46 and older
- Males are at greater risk than females for all age groups: 73 percent of injuries occur in males

- Americans of Caucasian, African and Hispanic ethnicity sustain 95.2 percent of injuries, compared with 2.5 percent for Asian Americans and 3.3 percent for other ethnic groups

Public Perceptions vs. the Facts:

- Most people consider themselves unlikely to suffer an eye injury, even though 29 percent of survey respondents had already had a serious eye injury or knew someone who had
- Women, especially married mothers and younger women, understand the risks for their family members more clearly than the public in general; men, especially younger or “blue collar” men, are more likely to see themselves at risk
- Most people assume that eye *diseases* are more significant threats to eye health than injuries, yet the public also underestimates their risks for the major eye diseases according to other surveys commissioned by the Academy
- Few survey respondents noted elders as an at-risk group

Where are eye injuries likely to occur?

The Facts:

- Home: Nearly half (44.1 percent) of all reported injuries happen in the home
- Sports: 14.7 percent of reported injuries happen during sports or recreational activities
- Work: 15.6 percent of reported injuries occur in an industrial, factory or office setting
- Roads: 11.4 percent of reported injuries happen on a street or highway, usually in relation to motor vehicle accidents
- The remaining 14.2 percent of reported injuries took place in schools, farms or other, unspecified locations

Public Perceptions vs. the Facts:

- People tend to think eye injuries happen “elsewhere”---to people performing high risk construction work or sports---rather than during everyday, home-based activities
- Americans fail to identify accidental slips and falls in the home as significant causes of eye injury, but the data show this is often how young children and elders are injured
- Schools and youth sports are not recognized as locations and activities that are significant for eye injury

What are the causes of eye injuries?

The Facts:



- Projectile objects such as flying debris or nails: 17.9 percent of all reported injuries
- Blunt objects like construction hand tools or hardware: 13.3 percent of reported injuries
- Fingers, fists or other body parts: 10.6 percent of reported injuries
- Sharp objects such as a wood splinter, fishhook or glass shard: 9.2 percent of reported injuries

Public Perceptions vs. the Facts:

- Only half (50 percent) of survey respondents report wearing protective eyewear when doing home or yard maintenance tasks. Though fireworks are responsible for *less than one percent* of all eye injuries, most respondents identify fireworks as the third leading cause of injury

Fireworks

Approximately 1,400 fireworks-related eye injuries occur each year, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (2007 report). Children and youth under age 20 sustain 47 percent of these eye injuries, and males of all ages are three times more likely to be hurt than females. Although most eye injuries are contusions or lacerations of the treat-and-release variety, serious and devastating injuries also occur.

Firecrackers were associated with the greatest number of injuries, the report found. Sparklers accounted for one-third of the injuries to children under five years old. Rockets and bottle rockets were related to more than three-quarters of the most serious injuries. Bystanders are at real risk of injury within 100 feet of fireworks and ideally should be at least 500 feet away. Viewing a public fireworks display is by far the safest choice parents can make for their children; in 2006, fewer than 100 injuries were related to public fireworks displays nationwide.

GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

July 1, 2008

National Survey Results Reducing Eye Injury - Executive Summary

To: American Academy of Ophthalmology

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

What do Americans understand about the risks of eye injuries? Are they concerned about it? What would persuade them to better protect themselves and their families? These are the key questions that were asked in a recent survey of the American public to help the American Academy of Ophthalmology with a public education effort on eye injury prevention.

The survey found that Americans do not entirely ignore the threat of serious eye injury, but they also do not properly understand their own risk of sustaining these injuries. In fact, there is an important disconnect between Americans' perceptions about eye injuries and the day-to-day realities of where and how they occur. Although many people say they own some form of eye protection, they demonstrate a basic misunderstanding about the circumstances of most serious eye injuries.

Clearly, Americans underestimate the risk of serious eye injury. Less than one in five perceive even a medium risk of eye injury. For many, serious eye injuries happen on construction sites, in factories, or when someone is carelessly using power tools. The perception is they do not occur—at least not regularly enough to be a real concern—in everyday household accidents.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology and its partner the American Society of Ocular Trauma has the potential to increase awareness of the risk of serious eye injury and, at least as stated in the survey, increase the use of prophylactic measures to decrease eye injury. We see greater movement towards seeing family members at risk, particularly among parents. Equally as important, 40 percent who do not own protective eyewear indicate a willingness to purchase eye gear by the end of the survey.

The following memo is based on a nationally representative survey conducted among 801 people ages 18 years and older by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for the American

Academy of Ophthalmology. The survey carries a margin of error of +/- 3.46 percent. The sample was stratified geographically and used random digit dial methodology.

Main Findings

- In the view of most Americans, eye injury poses a more modest risk than eye disease. Americans report that going blind or suffering from vision loss is less “top of mind” compared to other age-related health concerns, such as weight gain, joint and back pain and cancer. The acknowledged risks of eye injury are even lower (10 percent high risk, 19 percent medium risk), despite the fact that 29 percent report either experiencing serious eye injuries themselves or being close to someone who has experienced serious eye injury.
- Perceived risks of eye injury run higher among Americans who are likely to engage in more high-risk behaviors such as working in blue collar jobs, home repair or sports; for instance, 36 percent of younger men and 30 percent of men without a college education believe they are high or medium risk for serious eye injury. Perception of family risk is greater among women (32 percent high or medium risk compared to 18 percent among men), particularly younger women (38 percent high or medium risk) and married moms (35 percent high or medium risk).
- Americans do not ignore the risk of serious eye injury entirely. Two-thirds at least say they own protective eyewear, but, of these, 30 percent do not consistently *wear* the eye protection when doing home repairs or projects.¹ Thirty-seven percent of Americans never or rarely wear protective lenses for repairs or maintenance, and nearly half (48 percent) of Americans report never wearing eyewear when playing sports.
- Not surprisingly, relatively few Americans correctly guess when and where most eye injuries occur, though they do correctly identify men as the most likely victims of eye injury. The broader story that emerges, however, suggests that most people believe eye injuries typically occur somewhere...*else*. That is to say, they occur at construction sites, in factories, on July 4th and so forth. They are a problem for other people, associated only with dangerous worksites, power tools and sports. While it is true that power tools and sports account for many eye injuries, the dangerous assumption that they rarely occur in average households is something that should be disabused. In fact, studies show that more injuries occur

¹ Self-reported numbers like these are subject to social desirability affects; for instance, 69 percent also say they maintain a healthy weight all or most of the time.



in the household than anywhere else; nearly half of all serious eye injuries happen in the home.

- The research recommends two approaches to increasing awareness of the threat of eye injury and, more important, steps to reduce risk. First, people need basic education about the fact that even if they are not involved in construction or participate in sports, they face a significant risk of injuring their eyes. Second, equally important is that the simple step of using protective eyewear cuts the risk of injury by as much as 90 percent.
- This messaging moved both perception of risk and, more dramatically, potential behavior. After hearing the arguments about the risk of serious eye injury, assessments of high or medium personal risk of eye injury rise from 20 percent to 25 percent; assessments of high or medium risks to the family grow from 25 percent to 34 percent. Most notably, 40 percent of those who do not own protective eyewear say they are likely to purchase it.

Appendix A: Methodology

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, Inc. designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. Telephone numbers were generated by a random digit dial process, thereby allowing access to all listed and unlisted phones. The survey reached 801 adults, 18 years or older. The survey was conducted March 13-18, 2008. The data were weighted by gender, age, marital status, race, education, and region to ensure an accurate reflection of the population. The survey has an overall margin of error of +/- 3.46 percentage points, though margins will be wider for subgroups.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY EYE INJURY SNAPSHOT 2008 SUMMARY REPORT OF FINDINGS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2007, the American Academy of Ophthalmology (the Academy) retained Dennis H. Tootelian, Ph.D., to assist it in conducting its “Eye Injury Snapshot” survey in 2008. The overall purpose of this study was to obtain a “snapshot” of eye injuries occurring on a normal set of days by identifying the location, timing, nature, causes, and prognoses of eye injuries sustained across the United States.

Some of the specific issues addressed in this survey included:

- Where do eye injuries occur?
- At what times of day do most eye injuries occur, and what is the time lapse between when injuries occur and when patients are first examined?
- To what extent is eyewear worn by those sustaining eye injuries?
- What are the common causes of eye injuries, and to what extent do injuries involve the home, automobiles, and alcohol/drug use?
- What specific eye injuries occur most frequently and where is most treatment provided?
- Can good vision be restored following most eye injuries, and in the opinion of the ophthalmologist, could some or most injuries have been prevented by appropriate patient education?

KEY FINDINGS

Based on the findings of this study, and subject to the caveats expressed in the Methodology section of this **Summary Report**, the following key summary points and conclusions appear to be warranted:

- Nearly half (44.7%) of all eye injuries occurred in the home.
- More than 40 percent of the eye injuries occurring at home were caused by home projects and activities such as home repairs, yard work, cleaning, and cooking.
- Among all eye injuries reported, more than 78 percent of patients were not wearing eyewear at the time of injury.
- Of those reported to be wearing eyewear at the time of injury, (safety or sports spectacles, street spectacles, hard or soft contacts) only 5.3 percent were wearing safety or sports spectacles.
- Nearly 15 percent of injuries resulted in moderate to severe eye injuries, including loss of vision.
- Among injuries at home, more than one third (34.2%) were in the living areas of the home (e.g., kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, living/family room). The most

common place of injury in and around the home was the yard/garden (39.4%).

- More than one in four eye injuries in the home (29.0%) were caused by play/sports, and nearly one in seven (14.0%) by yard work.
- More than 80 percent of all injuries reported were the result of accidents. Assaults accounted for just over 10 percent of eye injuries.

- Males sustained nearly 75 percent of the injuries reported on the days during the “snapshot.”

- Nearly half (46%) of the injuries sustained were to people between the ages of 18 to 45. Only about one in seven injuries (15.7%) were to people 12 years of age or younger, and about one in twelve (8.8%) were to people 65 or older.

- Nearly half of ophthalmologists surveyed believed that eye injuries treated during the “snapshot” could have been avoided with patient education.

Overall, it appears that accidents were the primary cause of eye injuries, and these occur mostly in the home. While the prognosis for the majority of patients was quite good, about one in seven suffered moderate to severe eye injuries, including loss of vision. Many of the injuries could have been prevented had patients worn appropriate protective eyewear and/or had received some education concerning proper eye protection.

METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

The methodology for this survey conformed to generally accepted research practices. The population for this study was defined to be all ophthalmologists who are members of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in the United States. Also included were emergency medicine physicians, pediatricians, and other physicians who may treat eye injuries.

Participating ophthalmologists were asked to download questionnaires that had been designed by the Academy and complete a questionnaire for each patient who was examined for an eye injury during a two-week period in the spring of 2008. The particular dates for the survey are not included in this Summary Report in order to further protect patient confidentiality. The methodology was essentially the same as that used in prior Snapshot surveys conducted by the Academy

A total of 775 completed questionnaires were received within the time parameters set for responding to the survey.