

Eye On Safety

Protect Your Eyes From An Invisible Threat American Academy Of Ophthalmology Offers Tips For Safe Fun In The Sun

(NAPSA)—One of the greatest threats to your eyes is invisible. 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.

Studies show that exposure to bright sunlight may increase the risk of developing cataracts, age-related macular degeneration and growths on the eye.

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

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

The American Academy of Ophthalmology offers these tips on protecting your eyes:

- **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.

- **Do** check for 97 to 100 percent UV protection. Make sure your sunglasses block 97 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays.

- **Don't** rely on contact lenses. Even if you wear contact lenses with UV protection, remember your sunglasses.

- **Do** choose wrap-around styles. Ideally, your sunglasses should wrap all the way around to



The sun can permanently damage your eyes, so it's important to wear sunglasses that block UV rays.

your temples, so the sun's rays can't enter from the side.

- **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.

- **Do** wear a hat. In addition to your sunglasses, wear a broad-brimmed hat to protect your eyes.

- **Don't** forget the kids. 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.

- **Do** protect your eyes during peak sun times. Sunglasses should be worn whenever you're outside, and it's especially important to wear sunglasses in the early afternoon and at higher altitudes, where UV light is more intense.

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.

To find an Eye M.D., visit the Academy's Web site www.aao.org.