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**Ultra Violet Rays May Cause Damage to the Eyes Today  
and Tomorrow**

***Prevent Blindness America Educates Public as Part of May's  
UV Awareness Month***

**CHICAGO (April 24, 2013)** – As the weather continues to warm, more Americans will be heading outdoors to enjoy the sunshine. The public should know, however, that Ultra Violet (UV)-blocking sunglasses and hats are the ultimate sight-saving accessories to pair with their shorts, sandals, and short-sleeved shirts. Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, has declared May UV Awareness Month to help educate the public on the dangers of UV and how to protect the eyes.

While UV-A has lower energy, it penetrates deep into the eye and may injure the macula, the part of the retina responsible for sight in the center field of vision. UV-B radiation is presumably more dangerous and is mainly absorbed by the cornea and lens of the eye and can damage those tissues.

Sunglasses without UV protection may shade the eyes but actually cause the pupils to dilate, allowing in even more harmful rays. When going outside, both adults and children should always wear both a wide-brimmed hat or cap and the proper UV-rated sunglasses. Wrap-around sunglasses are best as they protect the eyes and the skin around the eyes. Some contact lenses may offer UV protection but they cannot protect the entire eye and the skin around it.

Photokeratitis, or corneal sunburn, is a result of intense exposure to UV-B. It is most common among individuals who spend long hours on the beach, in the water or on ski slopes without proper eye protection. It can be extremely painful and can result in temporary loss of vision for 1-2 days.

UV damage is also cumulative and has been linked to eye problems later in life including tumors, cataracts and macular degeneration, an eye disease which currently has no cure. Also, people who have had cataract surgery or other retinal disorders, and people who take certain medicines, such as tetracycline, sulfa drugs, birth control pills, diuretics and tranquilizers, are also at special risk.

PBA recommends wearing sunglasses that:

- reduce glare
- filter out 99-100 percent of UV rays
- protect the eyes
- are comfortable to wear
- do not distort colors

If at the beach or on the ski slopes, sunglasses should be worn that have a darker tint to block more light. The risk of eye damage from the sun is greater because of reflection off the water and snow.

“UV can cause immediate damage to the eyes, as is the case with a corneal sunburn, or cause damage that surfaces later in life,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “The key to healthy vision is to make eye protection part of our daily routine. We encourage everyone to make a committed effort to wear UV-blocking sunglasses year-round to help protect the gift of sight.”

For more information on the dangers of UV exposure and how to choose the best UV protection, please visit Prevent Blindness America’s dedicated Web site at [preventblindness.org/uv](http://preventblindness.org/uv) or call (800) 331-2020.

#### **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America 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 America 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 and regional offices, Prevent Blindness America 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](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).

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