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## **Protecting Eyes from Damaging UV Rays Can Help Save Sight Today and In the Future**

**CHICAGO (April 28, 2015)** – Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays has long been [linked to skin cancer](#). According to the [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#) (UV) radiation from the sun and from tanning beds is classified as a human carcinogen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization.

Another potential casualty of UV rays is healthy eyesight. Cataract, a leading cause of visual impairment across the globe, has been linked to UV exposure. In fact, a recent study by Case Western Reserve University, funded by the [National Eye Institute](#), provided a link between UV rays and “oxidative stress,” finding that UV light can substitute for oxygen to trigger harmful oxidative reactions in the lens.

In addition to cataract, other eye problems that UV rays can cause include corneal sunburn (photokeratitis), pterygium (a growth that begins on the white of the eye), macular degeneration, and the development of skin cancer around the eyelids.

Prevent Blindness, the nation’s oldest eye health and safety organization, has declared May as UV Awareness Month to help educate the public on the dangers of UV and steps to take to protect vision today and in the future.

There are different types of UV. UV-A radiation has lower energy and penetrates deep into the eye, which 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.

Prevent Blindness strongly recommends that both adults and children 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. For UV protection in everyday eyewear, there are several options such as UV-blocking lens materials, coatings and photochromic lenses. UV protection does not always cost a lot of money and does not get in the way of seeing

clearly. There are also many types of sports eye protection glasses that offer UV protection as well.

Prevent Blindness recommends speaking with an eye care professional to ensure the proper eye protection is being used no matter what the outdoor activity may be.

“Because UV damage to the eyes can be immediate, like corneal sunburns, and cumulative, causing cataracts and macular degeneration, it is imperative that we protect our eyes and encourage our kids to practice the same healthy habits to protect our 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 [preventblindness.org/uv](http://preventblindness.org/uv) 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](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).

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