

BUYING NEW SUNGLASSES FOR THE SUMMER? DON'T OVERLOOK THE IMPORTANCE OF UV PROTECTION

Wisconsin doctors of optometry want you to protect your vision and eye health from the damaging effects of UV rays

MADISON, WI – Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays, especially during the warmer months of the year, can be harmful to vision and eye health. The health risks associated with unprotected exposure to UV rays have been repeatedly publicized for many years. Although many consumers are wearing eye protection, a majority of them are unaware of the most important factor when selecting a pair of sunglasses, protection against sun damage caused by UV rays.

"Overexposure of the eyes to UV rays can be considered a risk factor for cataracts, macular degeneration, and skin cancer on the eyelids," explains Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) President and Milwaukee and Madison area optometrist Dr. Kellye Knueppel. "When searching for proper sun protection, you should always look for sunglasses that block more than 95 percent of UV-A radiation and more than 99 percent of UV-B radiation while screening out 75 to 90 percent of visible light."

It is extremely important to ensure that the sunglasses you purchase provide an adequate amount of UV protection, as not doing so can result in painful, serious consequences for your vision and eye health. "Other disorders that can occur are abnormal growths on the eye's surface and even sunburn of the eyes. These conditions can cause blurred vision, irritation, redness, tearing, and temporary vision loss. Damage done to the retina can cause macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness for adults in the U.S.," advised Dr. Knueppel.

According to the American Optometric Association's (AOA) eighth annual American Eye-Q® Survey, only 28 percent of respondents answered that UV protection is the most important factor in their mind when purchasing sunglasses. Whether it's cloudy or sunny, summer or winter, WOA members urge everyone to purchase sunglasses in order to protect their eyes from the sun's harmful UV rays.

Often overlooked is the increased importance of UV protection for children. "The lenses of a child's eyes are more transparent than those of adults, allowing shorter wavelength light to reach the retina," notes Dr. Knueppel. "Because the effects of solar radiation are cumulative, it's important to develop good eye protection habits early in life."

The WOA recommends the following when purchasing sunglasses or protective contact lenses:

- Make sure the sunglasses/protective contact lenses being purchased provide an adequate amount of UV protection, blocking out more than 95 percent of UV-A radiation and more than 99 percent of UV-B radiation. They should also screen out 75 to 90 percent of visible light.
- Check to make sure sunglass lenses are evenly colored and free of distortions or imperfections.
- Purchase gray-colored lenses because they reduce light intensity without altering the color of objects to provide the most natural color vision.
- Make sure the frame fits close to the eyes and is contoured to the shape of the head, in order to prevent exposure to UV radiation from all sides.
- Don't forget sun protection for young children and teenagers, who typically spend more time in the sun than adults this time of year and are at a greater risk for vision and eye damage.

For additional information on UV protection, please visit <http://www.aoa.org/uv-protection.xml>.

About the Survey

The eighth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From March 15-18, 2013 using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,000 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of the U.S. general population (margin of error at 95 percent confidence level).

About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Over 640 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's website at www.woa-eyes.org.