

MARCH IS SAVE YOUR VISION MONTH: KEEP EYE SAFETY IN YOUR SIGHTS

The Wisconsin Optometric Association urges all workers to protect themselves from job-related eye injuries

MADISON, WI — Save Your Vision Month has consistently played a critical role in educating the public on the importance of proper vision and eye health care. Championing this cause are the doctors of optometry who comprise the membership of the **Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA)**, and they wish to remind all citizens to protect their eyes in school, at home, while playing sports, and of course, at work. Regardless of whether you are using a computer or sledge hammer to get the job done, the WOA reports that visual discomfort, eye strain, and eye injuries in the workplace are not only common, but also cost organizations millions of dollars in lost productivity each year. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), roughly 2,000 U.S. workers sustain job-related eye injuries requiring medical treatment each day, many of which could have been prevented by following simple safety precautions.

“Healthy vision is critical to successfully completing job-related tasks,” advises Dr. Kellye Knueppel, Milwaukee and Madison area optometrist and current WOA President. “While most people think of construction or manufacturing as high-risk occupations where eye injuries are prevalent, even jobs requiring smart phones, laptops, and desktop computers can cause vision problems if these devices are not used properly. Small steps can equal big changes in easing vision strain.”

Using Digital Devices: Remember the “20-20-20” Rule

Results from the American Optometric Association’s (AOA) seventh annual American Eye-Q® survey show that 63 percent of all respondents reported experiencing eye strain or vision problems as a result of using electronic devices. Of these respondents, 76 percent reported that computers were the devices which bothered their vision the most. Prolonged use of digital devices can lead to Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS), which induces eye strain, dry eyes, headaches, fatigue, blurred vision, and loss of focus.

The optimal positioning for a desktop computer screen is below eye level, and the optimal distance for the user from the screen is 16-30 inches from the eyes. The WOA encourages all users of electronic device technology to follow the 20-20-20 rule, which will go a long way in keeping productivity up and discomfort down while working on digital devices. This rule is simple: every 20 minutes, rest your eyes by taking a 20 second break from the screen, and look at something 20 feet away.

Protect your Sight While On-Site

Many professions, from auto repair to health care, require protective eyewear to help reduce the risk of eye injuries. Yet, in many eye injury cases, workers failed to wear proper protective eyewear. Eye protection should be fit to an individual or adjustable to provide appropriate coverage. It should be comfortable and allow for sufficient peripheral vision. The eye protection chosen for specific work situations depends upon the nature and extent of the hazard, the circumstances of exposure, other protective equipment used, and personal vision needs. Selection of protective eyewear which is appropriate for a given task should be made based on a hazard assessment of each activity, including regulatory requirements when applicable.

“Eye safety, whether at home or in the workplace, is proven to help prevent vision loss,” acknowledges Dr. Knueppel. “The two main reasons workers experience eye injuries are either they don’t wear eye protection, or they are wearing the wrong kind of protection for the particular job.”

Both the WOA and AOA encourage workers to understand the vision and eye health safety dangers posed by their profession and to wear proper, fitted eye protection at all times. Those who work in dangerous environments also need to be proactive in replacing eyewear that is old or damaged. In order to encourage all workers to keep eye safety in their sights, the Wisconsin Optometric Association proudly recognizes March as Save Your Vision Month.

For additional information about healthy vision on the job, visit the AOA’s website at <http://www.aoa.org/>.

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. Approximately 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.

About the American Eye-Q® survey:

The seventh annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From May 9 - 16, 2012, using an online methodology, PSB conducted 1,009 online interviews among 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).