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MAY 2011

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An Eye Opener: Overexposure to UV Rays Can Lead to Eye Diseases

Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) encourages simple eye care precautions during sun exposure

Madison, Wis. – According to the **American Optometric Association's** 5th Annual American Eye-Q® survey, there is a definite disparity between men and women when it comes to taking care of their eyes, particularly involving sun protection and harmful UV rays. The survey shows that more women (35 percent) than men (28 percent) pay attention to UV protection ratings when purchasing sunglasses. The survey also showed that more men (36 percent) than women (27 percent) mistakenly believe name-brand sunglasses are better for your eyes and offer more protection than generic or less expensive sunglasses.

"Overexposure of the eyes to UV rays is serious and can lead to cataracts, macular degeneration or, in some cases, skin cancer around the eyelids," reports current **WOA** President and Green Bay Area Optometrist Dr. Lisa Slaby. "When searching for proper sun protection, you should always look for sunglasses that offer good protection, blocking 99 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B radiation and screening out 75 to 90 percent of visible light." Whether it's cloudy or sunny, summer or winter, member doctors of the **Wisconsin Optometric Association** urge everyone to take the necessary steps to protect their eyes from the sun's UV rays. According to Dr. Slaby, "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, temporary vision loss and even blindness."

Past *American Eye-Q®* surveys have found that while 66 percent of Americans purchase sunglasses for their children, only slightly more than one in four parents make sure the lenses have proper UV protections. Additionally, less than one third (29 percent) of parents make sure their child wears sunglasses while outdoors.

"The lenses of a child's eyes are more transparent than those of adults, allowing shorter wavelength light to reach the retina," said Dr. Slaby. "Because the effects of solar radiation are cumulative, it's important to develop good protection habits early in life, such as young children and teenagers."

The following tips from the AOA and WOA may help prevent eye and vision damage from overexposure to UV radiation:

1. Wear protective eyewear any time the eyes are exposed to UV rays, even on cloudy days and during the winter.
2. Look for quality sunglasses or contact lenses that offer good protection. Sunglasses or protective contact lenses should block 99 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B radiation and screen out 75 to 90 percent of visible light.
3. Check to make sure sunglass lenses are perfectly matched in color and free of distortions or imperfections.
4. Purchase gray-colored lenses because they reduce light intensity without altering the color of objects to provide the most natural color vision. Brown or amber-colored lenses may be better for those who are visually impaired because they increase contrast as well as reduce light intensity.
5. Don't forget sun protection for young children and teenagers, who typically spend more time in the sun than adults and are at a greater risk for eye damage.

For additional information on UV protection, please visit: <http://www.aoa.org/x4735.xml>, or to view a copy of the AOA's Shopping Guide for Sunglasses, please visit: <http://aoa.org/documents/SunglassShoppingGuide0810.pdf>.

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 650 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed and certified to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. The WOA also maintains an affiliation with the American Optometric Association (AOA). For more information, visit WOA's Web site at www.woa-eyes.org.

About the current 5th Annual American Eye-Q® survey

The fifth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From April 14-21, 2010, using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,007 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a national representative sample of U.S. general population (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level).

About the previous survey

The fourth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From May 21 – 24, 2009, using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,000 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level).