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**OVER-EXPOSURE TO THE SUN CAN MAKE
TIME OUTDOORS A DANGEROUS ACTIVITY**

Lack of Proper Eye Protection Means Greater Risk of Vision Loss

According to Prevent Blindness America, the warmer spring weather arrives, most Americans dive into their wardrobes to break out their t-shirts, shorts and sandals. But some may not realize that what they are not wearing can actually be harmful to their health. While most people know that sunscreen is critical when going outdoors to protect their skin from ultraviolet rays (UV), it is also important to remember that your eyes can be damaged as well. In fact, too much exposure to UV rays can result in serious eye damage.

Cataracts, the leading cause of blindness in the world, can be caused by UV-A and UV-B rays. According to the “Vision Problems in the U.S.” report by Prevent Blindness America, there are over 20 million people in America that suffer from the disease. UV-A penetrates deep into the eye and may injure the macula, the part of the retina responsible for sight in the center of the field of vision. UV-B is mainly absorbed by the cornea and lens of the eye and can damage these tissues. Corneal sunburn, is a result of intense exposure to UV-B. The condition is extremely painful and sufferers can have vision loss for 1-2 days. A tissue growth that forms on the white of the eye and is also caused by UV exposure, may spread to the cornea without treatment and may eventually require surgery.

“UV rays are harmful to everyone,” said Daniel Garrett of Prevent Blindness America. “Adults, children, men, women, no matter what your background, you are susceptible to eye damage from the sun if you don’t take the necessary precautions.”

Fortunately, effective eye protection is as simple as two easy steps.

- 1) Wearing both a wide-brimmed hat or cap and...
- 2) Proper UV-rated sunglasses to ward off the damaging effects. Sunglasses **should block out 99-100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation**, and don’t have to be expensive to be effective.

Consumers need to remember when purchasing sunglasses that just because the lenses may be tinted, it does not guarantee that they will block out UV radiation. Wraparound sunglasses are ideal.

Parents need to make sure their children wear UV eye protection as well. Choosing unbreakable, well-fitted sunglasses and a hat that shades the face is the best defense. Since sun damage is ongoing without proper protection, it is imperative that parents take precautions now to avoid vision loss in the future.

For more information on the dangers of UV exposure and steps to prevent them, please visit www.preventblindness.org or call 1-800-331-2020.