



211 West Wacker Drive  
Suite 1700  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

toll free 800.331.2020  
local 312.363.6001  
fax 312.363.6052

[preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For more information:**  
Prevent Blindness America  
Sarah Hecker  
(312) 363-6035  
[shecker@preventblindness.org](mailto:shecker@preventblindness.org)

## **Keep The Future Looking Bright By Wearing Shades**

### ***Prevent Blindness America Warns of Dangerous Effects of UV Damage***

**CHICAGO (April 26, 2012)** – Some may remember the lyrics to the 1980's song "The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades." But many are not aware of how true the title actually is. In fact, ultraviolet (UV) rays can cause immediate as well as lasting damage. Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, has declared May UV Awareness Month to help educate the public on the dangers of UV and how to protect the eyes.

For example, in addition to the skin, the eyes can also become "sunburned," known as photokeratitis. The painful condition may result in temporary loss of vision for a few days. Pterygium, a growth of tissue that forms on the white of the eye correlates directly to an individual's UV exposure. Without treatment, this condition may require surgical treatment.

Alarmingly, a recent survey conducted by N3L Optics found that more than 40 percent of runners and 35 percent of water sports participants do not consistently wear sunglasses during those activities. And, only 50 percent of men and 33 percent of women make it a priority to have the right sunglasses for their sport. Reflective surfaces like snow, water, sand and asphalt can greatly increase the amount of UV radiation to which the body is exposed.

Unfortunately, UV damage is cumulative and has been linked to eye problems later in life including tumors, cataracts and macular degeneration, an eye disease which currently has no cure.

The delicate skin around the eye and the eyelids is also susceptible to UV damage. According to the Office of Air and Radiation at the Environmental Protection Agency, basal cell carcinoma is the most common type of skin cancer to affect the eyelids and may appear on the lower lid, in the corners of the eye and under eyebrows.

PBA offers these tips on how to keep your future bright with protection from UV:

- Always wear sunglasses that block 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B rays. Sunglasses without UV protection may shade the eyes but actually cause the pupils to dilate, allowing in even more harmful rays.
- Sunglasses that block 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B rays should always be worn in conjunction with a brimmed hat.
- Wrap-around sunglasses are best as they protect the eyes and the skin around the eyes.
- Although some contact lenses may offer UV protection, they cannot protect the entire eye and the skin around it.
- Sunglasses, especially for children, should be made of unbreakable polycarbonate for active lifestyles.
- Ask your doctor about prescription medication that may cause increased sensitivity to light.
- Always wear eye protection when using a tanning bed. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, tanning beds can produce UV levels up to 100 times more than the sun, which can cause serious damage to the external and internal structures of the eye and eyelids.

“We want to stress the importance of protecting the eyes from UV rays, especially to young people,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “Although we may not notice any ill effects of UV exposure today, it can greatly impact our ability to see clearly in the future.”

For more information on the dangers of UV exposure and more information on how to choose the best sunglasses for adults and children, please visit Prevent Blindness America’s dedicated Web site at [preventblindness.org/protect-your-eyes-sun](http://preventblindness.org/protect-your-eyes-sun) or call (800) 331-2020.

### **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America 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 America 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, divisions and chapters, Prevent Blindness America 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).

###