

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:
Prevent Blindness America
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035

PROPER EYE PROTECTION IS ESSENTIAL WHEN ENJOYING THE GREAT OUTDOORS

CHICAGO (April 13, 2006) – With more Americans heading outside to enjoy the spring and summer activities, the potential risk of damage to the eyes from ultraviolet rays from the sun increases greatly. Prolonged exposure to UV rays can cause burns to the surface of the eye. And, the cumulative affect of UV damage has been linked to cataracts and age-related macular degeneration later in life.

“We can’t stress enough how important it is to protect your eyes every day from the sun,” said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. “Even when the weather is overcast, the sun still emits intense, harmful rays.”

Fortunately, adults and children can easily protect their eyes by wearing the proper sunglasses and a brimmed hat. Consumers must be careful of the type of sunglasses they purchase because not every pair offers UV protection. Just because a lens is tinted does not mean it offers UV defense. However, affordable sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B rays are widely available.

Adults at a higher risk for eye problems caused by UV rays are those that spend a large amount of time in the sun, whether for work or recreation. Also, people who have had cataract surgery or other retinal disorders, and people who take certain medicines, such as tetracycline, sulfa drugs, birth control pills, diuretics and tranquilizers, are also at special risk.

Children are more susceptible to UV damage than adults because they tend to spend more time outside than adults. Prevent Blindness America encourages parents to help protect their children’s eyes by doing the following:

- Only purchase sunglasses that offer UV protection.
- Make sure the sunglasses fit the child’s face and shield the eyes from all angles.
- Choose lenses that are impact resistant and made of polycarbonate, never glass, unless prescribed by a doctor.
- Always insist that children wear a brimmed hat in conjunction with their sunglasses.

“Sun damage accumulates over time so teaching children to protect their eyes is an important early step toward a lifetime of healthy vision,” added Garrett.

- More -

Prevent Blindness America Warns Public About the Dangers of UV Exposure Page 2

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 www.preventblindness.org or call 1-800-331-2020.

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, 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, it's 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 www.preventblindness.org.

###