

**PROTECT YOUR EYES AGAINST HOME-RELATED HAZARDS
CUT YOUR RISK OF EYE DISEASES AND INJURIES**

Schaumburg, Ill – There are many common products around the home that contribute to thousands of eye injuries every year, yet 90% of these injuries are preventable. In 2002, there were an estimated 125,000 eye injuries related to common household products – this figure is low, as it includes only eye injuries treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms. "Items that are used everyday by millions of people and taken for granted, can be potentially blinding if proper safety measures are not followed, especially with young children," said Daniel D. Garrett, Prevent Blindness America (PBA) spokesperson. Another serious threat to vision is the sun, which can contribute to cataracts and cancer, but with proper precautions, these health risks can be decreased.

The following are the top 10 categories contributing to the largest number of estimated eye injuries from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, including statistics for children ages 14 and younger:

Product	Estimate	Children ages 0-14
Bleaches (non-cosmetic)	5,881	1,335
General Purpose Cleaners	4,847	1,822
Grooming/Cosmetics	4,817	1,273
Bathroom Fixtures and products	4,639	750
Paper/Cardboard products	4,589	989
Pens and Pencils	4,329	3,853
Yard and Garden	4,192	490
Kitchen (flatware, dishes, glasses)	3,508	1,493
Furniture	3,365	1,760
Cleaning and Polishing products	3,073	702

Nearly one million Americans have lost their sight to an eye injury. More than half of all product-related eye injuries happen to people age 25 and younger. Another one-third happen to those between the ages of 25 and 44. Males are twice as likely to suffer eye injuries as females. Children left playing alone are also at risk. You can prevent eye injuries at home by:

- **Knowing the dangers**
- **Taking steps to remove hazards**
- **Wearing proper eye protection**

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Most people are aware of the risks of developing skin cancer from the sun, but are less aware that UV rays can cause damage to the eyes. Long-term exposure to UV rays has been linked to skin cancer around the eyelids. One of the risk factors for developing cataracts is long time exposure to UV rays. According to PBA, there are nearly 20.5 million Americans age 40 and older with cataract. Cataract affects more than half of all Americans by the age of 80, so you should take any steps you can to decrease your risk. "Sunglasses is essential to protecting your skin, but a good pair of sunglasses will help protect your eyes now, and as you age," said Garrett.

UV radiation in sunlight, including both UV-A and UV-B, has been shown to be harmful to the eye. Constant exposure to bright sunlight can damage the cornea (the clear outer part of the eye that allows lights through to the retina), the lens (the part of the eye responsible for focusing), and the retina (the innermost layer of the eye that sends an image to the brain). The risk is greatest at midday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and during summer months. The best defense for everyone is to wear sunglasses that screen 99 to 100 percent of UV rays, and brimmed hats. It is also very important to protect children's sight from the damaging effects of the sun – choosing unbreakable, well-fitted sunglasses and a hat that shades the face is the best way.

PBA offers several free brochures and fact sheets to help you protect your sight: *Ultraviolet Rays*, *Eye Safety is No Accident*, *Most Hazardous Products to Children's Eyes*, and *Eye Safety Tips for Your Home*. Call 1-800-331-2020 today to receive these free materials.

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.

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