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Ultraviolet Rays Can Be Harmful to Eyes, Lead to Cataract or Macular Degeneration

Prevent Blindness Educates Public on Ultraviolet Dangers as Part of May's Ultraviolet Awareness Month

CHICAGO (April 21, 2016) – Prevent Blindness, the nation's oldest eye health and safety organization, has declared May as UV (ultraviolet) Awareness Month to help educate the public on the dangers of UV and steps to take to protect vision today and in the future. UV damage to the eyes can be immediate, such as a corneal sunburn, and cumulative, including cataract and macular degeneration.

According to a [new survey by Transitions®](#), Millennials are most likely to simply go without sunglasses to combat the change in weather conditions, leaving their eyes exposed to harmful UV rays. And, half say they go without shades even when they need them, compared to 38 percent of Gen Xers and 28 percent of Baby Boomers.

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

- Speak with an eyecare professional to ensure the proper UV eye protection is being used.
- 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.)
- Wear sunglasses that block 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B rays in conjunction with a brimmed hat.
- Use wrap-around sunglasses —they do the best job of protecting 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. According to [AllAboutVision.com](#), certain medications, such

as tetracycline, sulfa drugs, birth control pills, diuretics and tranquilizers, can increase your body's sensitivity to UV and high-energy visible (HEV) radiation.

“When enjoying the outdoors, whether on the water, the sand, on pavement or even in the snow, we need to remember to protect our eyes from harmful UV ray exposure,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “By taking the necessary steps today, we can help our healthy vision in the future!”

For more information on the dangers of UV exposure and how to choose the best UV protection, please visit the Prevent Blindness dedicated Web page at <http://www.preventblindness.org/protect-your-eyes-sun> or call (800) 331-2020.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness 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 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, Prevent Blindness 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 or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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