



News Release, For Immediate Distribution

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When the Heat Wave Starts, Don't Forget UV Protection for Your Eyes

PORTLAND, OR, May 15, 2008 – As the sun shines and temperatures rise, many people become concerned about Ultraviolet (UV) protection, but most are thinking about their skin not their eyes, according to a new survey. The Oregon Optometric Physician's Association warns people to wear proper eye protection because eyes can sustain damage when exposed to the sun's UV rays.

"As people head out to shop for a trendy pair of sunglasses, we hope they'll consider more than just fashion," said Dr. Carol Marusich, O.D., Eugene. "Just as your skin can be burned by UV radiation, your eyes can also suffer damage."

According to the American Optometric Association's 2007 American Eye-Q® survey, 40 percent of Americans do not think UV protection is an important factor to consider when buying sunglasses. The OOPA says that's unfortunate because prolonged, unprotected exposure to UV rays may cause eye conditions that can lead to a variety of vision disorders, such as cataracts and pterygia, (callus-like changes to the exterior coats of the eye). And there is the possibility that macular degeneration might be hastened by UV exposure. These conditions can cause blurred vision, eye irritation and redness, and persistent tearing.

The effects of sunlight exposure are cumulative, so people who work or recreate outside are at the greatest risk. UV radiation reflects off surfaces such as snow, water and white sand, so the risk is particularly high for people on beaches, boats or ski slopes. The risk for serious damage is greatest during the mid-day hours, generally from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and during summer months.

Children and teenagers are particularly susceptible to the sun's damaging rays because they typically spend more time outdoors than adults. In addition, the lenses of their eyes are more transparent than those of adults. This allows more UV light to reach the retina at the back of the eye. The American Eye-Q® survey showed that 61 percent of Americans buy sunglasses for their children, but 23 percent do not check that the lenses provide protection against UV rays.

"The lesson, especially for parents and young people, is that eyes need protection, too. You can protect your eyes or your child's with a brimmed hat and eyewear that properly absorbs UV radiation," added Dr. Marusich. "And, don't overlook the UV protection options for regular clear glasses and contact lenses as well."

Keep these **four tips** in mind when choosing and using sunglasses:

1. Wear protective eyewear any time your eyes are exposed to UV radiation, even on cloudy days and during the winter.
2. Look for quality sunglasses that block out 99 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B radiation and screen out 75 to 90 percent of visible light.
3. Make sure sunglass lenses are perfectly matched in color and free of distortions or imperfections.
4. Gray-colored lenses reduce light intensity without altering the color of objects, providing the most natural color vision.

For additional information on UV protection, please visit: <http://www.aoa.org/x4735.xml>.

Survey Information

The second American Eye-Q® survey was commissioned by Opinion Research Corporation (ORC). Using a random digit dialing methodology, ORC conducted interviews with 1,005 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. households. The margin of error is ±3.1 percent for the general population. All data is weighted to represent the U.S. general population with respect to gender, geographic region, and age group.

About the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association

The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association is a statewide organization comprised of Doctors of Optometry, college of optometry faculty, optometric students and industry-related associates. It advocates advancing the quality, availability and accessibility of eye, vision and related health care. It also works to represent the profession of optometry, to enhance and promote the independent and ethical decision making of its members, and to assist optometric physicians in practicing the highest standards of patient care. Based in Milwaukie, Oregon, the OOPA has nearly 400 members. For more information, visit www.oregonoptometry.org.

About the American Optometric Association (AOA)

The American Optometric Association represents more than 34,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. AOA doctors of optometry are highly qualified, trained doctors on the frontline of eye and vision care who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. In addition to providing eye and vision care, optometrists play a major role in a patient's overall health and well-being by detecting systemic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Doctors of optometry have the skills and training to provide more than two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States. For more information, visit www.aoa.org.