



PRESS RELEASE

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| FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shading Eyes from the Summer Sun Prevents Long Term Damaging Effects During July's UV Awareness Month

Simple tips can help everyone to shield eyes from strong UV rays

(Honolulu, Hawaii), July 1, 2008 – Hawaii’s diverse range of open-air activities combined with longer days makes summer a great time to be outdoors and active. However, with more intense amounts of ultraviolet rays during this time of year, protection from the sun is extremely important. The American Academy of Ophthalmology designates July as UV Safety Month, encouraging everyone to practice various ways to shade the eyes from harmful UV rays.

“Protecting your eyes year-round is important, but ultraviolet protection during the summer months is essential,” advises Dr. Christopher Tortora, M.D., Medical Director of Hawaiian Eye Center. “Ultraviolet light from the sun can permanently damage your eyes, and that light is much more intense at this time of year”

Ultraviolet, or UV, light is a type of high-energy invisible light which can cause damage to skin and eyes. UV light radiation is significant in Hawaii all year, but it is more intense during the summer months. Risk may be as much as three times higher for sunburn and eye damage during the summer months. The Ozone layer in our atmosphere blocks the majority of UV radiation, but can not block it all. In addition, thinning of the ozone layer worldwide makes UV light all the more dangerous. Simply being outside, whether it’s sunny or cloudy, can cause damage.

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The effects that UV rays have on the eyes can lead to eye disease and even vision loss. Pterygium (a growth on the surface of the eye), eyelid cancers, cataract and macular degeneration all are made worse by exposure to ultraviolet light. These can all be serious conditions. With extensive sun exposure, the eyes can actually get sunburned, resulting in redness and pain. Fortunately, eye protection during the summer is virtually effortless. Wearing proper UV protection sunglasses is a must, and the best ones aren't always the most expensive so there's no harm in shopping around to find that perfect pair that both protects and looks stylish. A good pair that properly protects eyes blocks 99% to 100% of all ultraviolet light and should be impact resistant. They also may be labeled as "UV 400." Wide-brimmed hats are also a good idea as they block direct sunlight from shining in over sunglasses. When swimming, goggles are a great way to guard the eyes from chlorine, bacteria, and even the sun. Make sure the label says they block ultraviolet light.

"It's also good to remember that the ultraviolet radiation from the sun is most intense between the hours of 10 a.m to 3 p.m," said Dr. Tortora. "If you can, it is sometimes best to plan your outdoor activities in the early morning or late afternoon."

Even though summer only lasts a brief three months, applying these useful eye protection tips should not end there. UV rays can be damaging every season, especially in Hawaii, so it is vital to practice these guidelines to ensure healthy vision year-round.

Dr. Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of The Hawaiian Eye Show, a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision. He and his colleagues at Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to education the public about the importance of preventative eye care. To learn more about other health issues, please call Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8448 where "*life has never looked better.*"

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