



The CDA and COS Want Canadians to Know that Sunglasses Can Save Your Eyes

OTTAWA, ON - When it comes to sun safety, the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) is asking Canadians to think about more than just their skin. They want people to take precautions to protect their eyes from the sun's harmful rays too.

That's why the CDA has partnered with the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) to launch *The Sunglasses Project*, an awareness effort that will coincide with this year's Sun Awareness Program, which takes place **June 5-11, 2017**.

The focus of the sunglasses campaign is to promote awareness about the benefits of UVR eye protection and to get people to practice sun safety that includes the eyes.

"Our hope is that every Canadian will become aware of the associated eye health risk of UVR exposure and take steps to protect themselves, their families and their loved ones," says Dr. Jennifer Beecker, National Chair, Sun Awareness Working Group.

That means wearing a wide-brimmed hat, staying out of the sun during peak UVR hours (11 am to 3 pm) and wearing the appropriate type of sunglasses.

How UV rays harm eyes

Unprotected UVR exposure can cause short-term pain and discomfort, but permanent damage to the eyes can result from prolonged exposure to the sun without adequate protection.

"Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to the sun's rays because their ocular lenses aren't yet mature and can't filter UV light as effectively as adults, causing damage to the retina. In addition, their pupils tend to be larger by nature, allowing more light rays into the eye," says Guillermo Rocha, MD, FRCSC, FACS, President of the COS.

Short-term, excessive exposure to UV light—especially from light reflected from sand, snow or pavement—without adequate eye protection can produce a burn on the eye's surface. It's like sunburn but the damage occurs in the eyes.

Long-term, cumulative UV exposure can also damage parts inside the eye, such as the lens and retina, increasing the risk of chronic eye diseases and various cancers. Years of repeated exposure can lead to more permanent damage that may contribute to vision loss and eye diseases, including cataracts (clouding of the lens) and macular degeneration (breakdown of the macula), and pterygium (a growth that invades the corner of the eyes). In addition, it increases the risk of melanoma of the eye.

Skin cancer is also a risk, since the area around the eyes is thin, delicate, and you can't easily apply sunscreen to protect it. Non-melanoma skin cancers, namely basal cell carcinoma (BCC) and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), are common in the eye area.

Choosing the right eye protection

Eyewear with UV protection can help guard against these eye-related health conditions. That means that wearing sunglasses shouldn't be just about looking good or blocking out bright light, but about disease prevention.

Just as one would look at the SPF value on a sunscreen before buying it, people should be looking for assurance of adequate UV protection when choosing eyeglasses.

- **Check out the label.** Look for glasses that filter out 99-100 per cent of UV light (both UV-A and UV-B).
- **Choose the right design.** If you spend a lot of time in the sun, it is recommended that you buy wrap-around glasses to prevent the sun from entering your eyes from the sides.
- **Consider more than colour and cost.** Don't judge a pair by color or price. Dark lenses don't necessarily mean good protection nor do expensive glasses.

Overall, protecting your eyes means wearing UV-protective sunglasses and wearing a wide-rimmed hat to offer further coverage.

Through the Sunglasses Project, the CDA and COS aim to open people's eyes to the importance of sun safety for the eyes, as well as for the skin.

For more information about skin and eye health, please visit: www.dermatology.ca and www.cos-sco.ca

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Sun Awareness Week

The Canadian Dermatology Association has organized the nation-wide early summer Sun Awareness Week since 1989. The aim is to educate Canadians about the dangers of too much sun and to help stop the rising incidence of skin cancer in Canada. This year's Sun Awareness Week is Monday, June 5 to Sunday, June 11, and involves a number of events and activities across Canada.

About the CDA

The Canadian Dermatology Association, founded in 1925, represents Canadian dermatologists. The association provides easy access to the largest, most reliable source

of medical knowledge on dermatology. CDA exists to advance the science and art of medicine and surgery related to the care of the skin, hair and nails; provide continuing professional development for its members; support and advance patient care; provide public education on sun protection and other aspects of skin health; and promote a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. By doing so, CDA informs and empowers both medical professionals and the Canadian public. To learn more about what the work CDA does visit <http://www.dermatology.ca> or join the conversation on <http://www.Twitter.com/CdnDermatology> or www.Facebook.com/CdnDermatology.

About the COS

The Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS) is the national, recognized authority on eye and vision care in Canada. As eye physicians and surgeons, we are committed to assuring the provision of optimal medical and surgical eye care for all Canadians by promoting excellence in ophthalmology and by providing services to support our members in practice. Our membership includes over 900 ophthalmologists and 200 ophthalmology residents. We work collaboratively with government, other national and international specialty societies, our academic communities (ACUPO), our provincial partners and affiliates and other eye care professionals and patient groups to advocate for health policy in Canada in the area of eye and vision health. COS is an accredited, award-winning provider of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) through the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and is an affiliate of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA).

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