

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Is the Sun in Your Eyes?**

Halifax, NS – June, 2004 - Summer is upon us and the ultraviolet rays increasing. The Nova Scotia Association of Optometrists (NSAO) would like to remind everyone to wear proper sun protection, which blocks 99% of UVA and UVB rays. UV radiation can have damaging short and long term effects on your eyes.

Excessive radiation exposure can cause photokeratitis. This, "sunburn of the eye," results in a painful, watery, red eye which lasts a few days. This type of exposure happens commonly with exposure during welding.

We all know that ultraviolet (UV) rays cause premature aging of our skin: UV light also causes premature aging in our eyes. Dr. Jeff Sangster, President of the NSAO reminds us "just as we put on sunscreen to protect our skin we should wear sunglasses to protect our eyes."

Dr. Sangster explains, "the two most common degenerative eye diseases we see are cataracts and macular degeneration". Studies have shown that exposure to UV light can speed up the progression of these diseases, and statistics show that macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in North America.

In preparation for summer, people often get that head start on the local tanning bed. What people may not factor in is that tanning devices, just like the sun, emit harmful UV rays. For optimal tanning bed eye safety, the NSAO wants people to know they should always wear protective goggles that cover and fit snugly over your eyes. If you use the salon's goggles, be sure they have been sterilized to prevent infection.

For protection from the harmful effects of the UV rays outdoors, wear appropriate sunglasses and/or a hat with a brim. The sun's rays are especially strong on the water due to reflections, wrap around frames can provide additional protection.

Enjoy the summer, but remember...wear eye protection and protect your eyesight!

*The Nova Scotia Association of Optometrists represents over eighty Doctors of Optometry throughout the province.*

*For more information contact:*

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