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SUMMER SHINES LIGHT ON EYE HEALTH

As the sun beats down this summer, stop and spare some time to think about protecting your eyes.

NSW Health advises you can do plenty to reduce the risk of getting cancers, permanent eye damage or even the loss of eyesight.

Sydney Eye Hospital Ophthalmologist Dr Weng Sehu said summer brings more hazardous risks to our eyes due to increased exposure to Ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

“More exposure to UV radiation can increase your risk of developing cancerous growths and accelerate the development of cataracts. And, more outdoor summer activities means a higher risk of eye injuries,” Dr Sehu said.

“One in three people aged over 65 in NSW have significant cataracts, operations to treat cataracts are the most common elective surgery in the state.”

NSW Health recommends summer eye safety tips including:

- **Choose sunglasses with full UV protection:** UV radiation is much stronger in summer. Look for glasses labelled either UV400 or 100 per cent UV protection, to block the full spectrum of UVA and UVB rays. In Australia, glasses are scored from zero (fashion eyewear) to category four (highly specialised glasses with sun-glare and UV protection). Look for glasses labelled at least category three.
- **Buy sunglasses from a reputable retailer:** Sunglasses bought online can be of poor quality and may not be tested to Australian standards. Do your research before buying.
- **Pay attention to the lens style:** Wraparound styles provide better eye protection. When playing sports choose shatter-proof polycarbonate lenses to avoid eye injuries. Sunglasses also can protect from UV damage on the eyelid which has the thinnest skin on the body and is prone to skin cancers.
- **Always wear a hat outside:** Even on cloudy days – because clouds don’t block all spectrums of UV light.
- **Always wear goggles:** Goggles should be worn in indoor and outdoor pools. Even in chlorinated pool water, some microorganisms may survive and cause infection. This infection risk increases in lakes and hot tubs. If you wear contact lenses, you’re more susceptible to infection as your eyes are prone to irritation.

- **Avoid buying breakable toys:** Be aware breakable toys or toys with small parts, particularly projectile toys, have the potential to cause significant eye injuries.
- **Be careful when working around the house:** An increase in outdoor activities in the summertime can mean a greater exposure to hazardous chemicals or flying debris. When gardening or working on a household project wear glasses, goggles or a face shield.