

# Ultra Violet Rays May Cause Damage to the Eyes Today and Tomorrow

**Columbus, OH (May 1, 2013)** – As the weather continues to warm, more Americans will be heading outdoors to enjoy the sunshine. The public should know, however, that Ultra Violet (UV)-blocking sunglasses and hats are the ultimate sight-saving accessories to pair with their shorts, sandals, and short-sleeved shirts. Prevent Blindness Ohio has declared May UV Awareness Month to help educate the public on the dangers of UV and how to protect the eyes.

While UV-A rays have lower energy, they penetrate deep into the eye and may injure the macula, the part of the retina responsible for sight in the center field of vision. UV-B radiation is presumably more dangerous and is mainly absorbed by the cornea and lens of the eye and can damage those tissues.

Sunglasses without UV protection may shade the eyes but actually cause the pupils to dilate, allowing in even more harmful rays. When going outside, both adults and children should always wear both a wide-brimmed hat or cap and the proper UV-rated sunglasses. Wrap-around sunglasses are best as they protect the eyes and the skin around the eyes. Some contact lenses may offer UV protection but they cannot protect the entire eye and the skin around it.

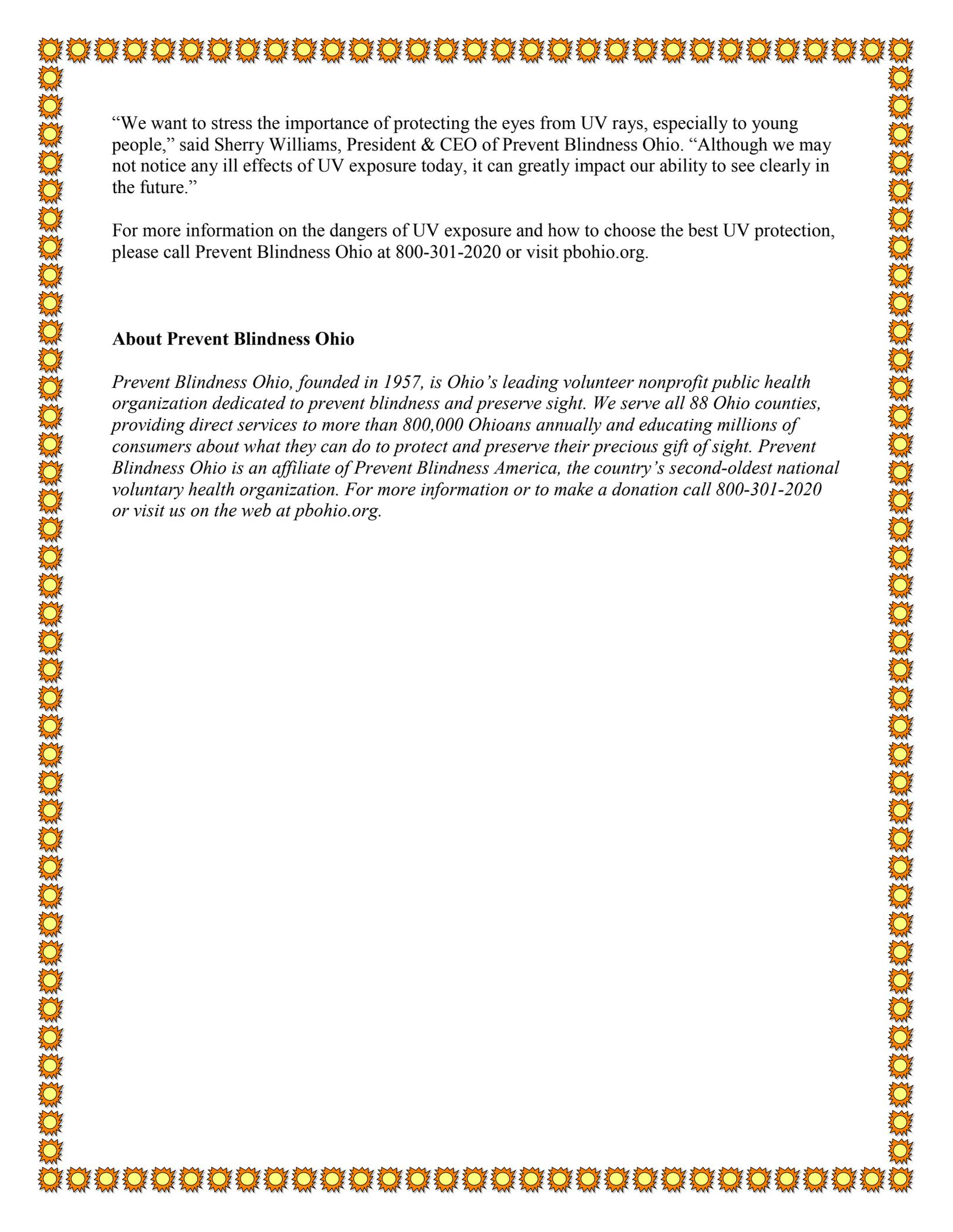
Photokeratitis, or corneal sunburn, is a result of intense exposure to UV-B. It is most common among individuals who spend long hours on the beach, in the water or on ski slopes without proper eye protection. It can be extremely painful and can result in temporary loss of vision for 1-2 days.

UV damage is also cumulative and has been linked to eye problems later in life including tumors, cataracts and macular degeneration, an eye disease which currently has no cure. Also, people who have had cataract surgery or other retinal disorders, and people who take certain medicines, such as tetracycline, sulfa drugs, birth control pills, diuretics and tranquilizers, are at special risk.

Prevent Blindness Ohio recommends wearing sunglasses that:

- reduce glare
- filter out 99-100 percent of UV rays
- protect the eyes
- are comfortable to wear
- do not distort colors

If at the beach or on the ski slopes, sunglasses should be worn that have a darker tint to block more light. The risk of eye damage from the sun is greater because of reflection off the water and snow.

A decorative border consisting of a repeating pattern of stylized sun icons with rays, arranged in a rectangular frame around the page content.

“We want to stress the importance of protecting the eyes from UV rays, especially to young people,” said Sherry Williams, President & CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “Although we may not notice any ill effects of UV exposure today, it can greatly impact our ability to see clearly in the future.”

For more information on the dangers of UV exposure and how to choose the best UV protection, please call Prevent Blindness Ohio at 800-301-2020 or visit [pbohio.org](http://pbohio.org).

### **About Prevent Blindness Ohio**

*Prevent Blindness Ohio, founded in 1957, is Ohio’s leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to prevent blindness and preserve sight. We serve all 88 Ohio counties, providing direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educating millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio is an affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the country’s second-oldest national voluntary health organization. For more information or to make a donation call 800-301-2020 or visit us on the web at [pbohio.org](http://pbohio.org).*