



## Health & Wellness News Winter 2007-2008

### Safe Toys & Celebrations

In the 1983 movie "A Christmas Story", Ralphie sets out to convince the world that a Red Ryder BB gun is the perfect gift. "You'll shoot your eye out!" was the response he got from his parents, teacher and even Santa Claus. It's one of the more memorable quotes from this Christmas classic because we've all heard it repeatedly during our childhood. And unfortunately, it comes true for too many people.



It's hard to resist giving into your child's overwhelming desire for his or her most wished for gift, especially during the holiday season, but sometimes you have to stand firm for their safety. Toys - including some seemingly innocent ones - and sporting equipment are responsible for thousands of eye injuries to children every year. That's why OptiVue promoting Safe Toys and Celebrations Month and urging Americans to purchase safe toys and gifts this holiday season and all year long. Every year, ophthalmologists see the devastating injuries that seemingly safe toys can cause.

When shopping for toys, check labels to make sure they are appropriate for your child's age and maturity level. Watch out for games or toys with sharp or protruding parts or projectiles, and consider carefully before giving darts, pellet guns or other firearms. These items are not appropriate for most children.

If you're giving sporting equipment, consider including appropriate protective eyewear. Approximately 40,000 sports-related eye injuries occur every year, but 90 percent of these injuries could be avoided with the right protective eyewear.



Lastly, before you open a bottle of your favorite bubbly to toast the holidays, learn how to do it safely. Make sure corks are covered by a towel and are pointed away from you and others. Also, ensure the champagne is chilled to at least 45 degrees Fahrenheit before opening.

Every year, warm bottles of champagne, coupled with bad cork-removal technique, are responsible for causing serious blinding injuries. By following a few simple safety tips, you can make sure your holidays are festive and injury-free.

### Glaucoma Awareness

January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month, an important time to spread the word about this sight-stealing disease. Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable blindness. Everyone, from infants to seniors is vulnerable. Moreover, among African-American and Hispanic populations, glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness.

Over 3 million Americans, and nearly 70 million people worldwide, have glaucoma. Experts estimate that half of them don't know they have it. Combined with our aging population, we can see an epidemic of blindness looming if we don't raise awareness about the importance of regular eye examinations to preserve vision.

The most common type of glaucoma—primary open angle glaucoma—is hereditary; so if you do have glaucoma, don't keep it a secret. Let your family members know they are at increased risk.

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually steal sight without warning. Although the most common forms primarily affect the middle-aged and the elderly, glaucoma can affect people of all ages.

There are two main types of glaucoma: primary open angle glaucoma (POAG), and angle closure glaucoma. These are marked by an increase of intraocular pressure (IOP), or pressure inside the eye. When optic nerve damage has occurred despite



a normal IOP, this is called normal tension glaucoma. Secondary glaucoma refers to any case in which another disease causes or contributes to increased eye pressure, resulting in optic nerve damage and vision loss.



Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable blindness, and in the most common form, there are virtually no symptoms. Vision loss begins with peripheral or side vision, so if you have glaucoma, you may not notice anything until significant vision is lost. The best way to protect your sight from glaucoma is to get a comprehensive eye examination. Then, if you have glaucoma, treatment can begin immediately.

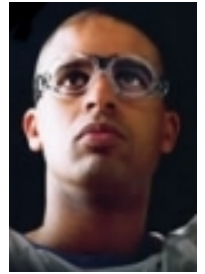
Glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness among African-Americans. And among Hispanics in older age groups, the risk of glaucoma is nearly as high as that for African-Americans. Also, siblings of persons diagnosed with glaucoma have a significantly increased risk of having glaucoma.

Those at higher risk include people of African, Asian, and Hispanic descent, people over 60, and people with diabetes or hypertension. Regular eye exams are especially important for those at higher risk for glaucoma, and may help to prevent unnecessary vision loss.

## Save Your Vision

Imagine going to a basketball game, driving the lane, taking an elbow to the face and then everything gets blurry. The crowd turns to a haze and you fall to the ground. You're the next victim of an accidental sports eye injury and may lose your career; you may even lose your sight. Imagine waking up but your whole world is fuzzy; the annoying spot in your vision has turned to a veil over your entire field of vision.

Ocular trauma, such as sports injuries, is the number one cause of vision loss in young people. The American Academy of Ophthalmology reports that there are thousands of sports and recreation-related injuries each year that could be prevented with protective eyewear that is appropriate for the sport.



The AAO also cautions people to wear protective eyewear when doing hazardous activities around the home or workplace, including mowing the lawn, changing your car battery and working with any other hazardous chemicals to prevent splashes and other flying debris. Wear safety glasses when working with metal, using nail guns or when doing any kind of woodworking.

AOS glasses can be purchased at local hardware stores for about \$10 and they're pretty near indestructible. Ten dollars is cheap and it's a lot cheaper than losing an eye.

AOS glasses are also available in tinted lenses with ultraviolet protection. Just because sunglasses are expensive does not mean they are quality protection so you should look for safety-grade lenses and sturdy frames.

According to the AAO, studies show that exposure to bright light can damage the eyes over time. Damage from sunlight can also lead to glaucoma. Children should also be wearing sunglasses to protect their eyes from harmful ultraviolet rays.

According to the AAO 90 percent of eye injuries can be prevented. The biggest mistake people make in terms of eye health is not wearing eye protection, including safety glasses, sunglasses and protection for sports.

Eye diseases and other health problems can also cause vision loss. Routine exams are essential in early detection of eye problems and ensuring overall eye health. Diabetes and hypertension both affect the blood vessels in the eyes and can cause damage to the retina. Diabetes is also the largest cause of vision impairment or loss in the elderly. It is important to be aware of family history of eye diseases and to inform your optometrist or ophthalmologist of any vision problems or medical conditions you have.