

**4<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

## **BRITISH PUBLIC PUTTING THEIR EYESIGHT AT RISK**

NEARLY two thirds of the British public are neglecting their eyesight, according to the results of a shock survey released today.

The independent IPSOS report\*, commissioned by Transitions Optical, has revealed that only 41% of the population go for an eye examination at least every 2 years whilst 81% of us visit the dentist over the same period.

Ironically, when polled on the importance of all five senses, sight was viewed as the most valuable by the majority of respondents [93%] and the one we fear losing the most [65%]. Yet a quarter of respondents still think that they only need to see an eye doctor when they have vision problems. Regular eye checks, however, are a must since many eye problems have no obvious symptoms and 50% of vision loss can be prevented with an eye exam.

One significant area which is often overlooked is the long-term unprotected exposure to the sun's UVA and UVB rays which can lead to a range of eye health problems including age-related macular degeneration, cataracts and other eye conditions that can compromise the quality of our vision. As Roland Allen, Business Director Transitions Optical UK explains: "Damage from UV exposure is cumulative, building each and every time our eyes are exposed to the sun. It's great that everyone is aware of the importance of protecting their skin by applying sun cream, now they need to apply the same principle to protecting their eyes not just in the summer, but all year round.'

He adds: 'Another common misconception is that UV damage is only at its highest in the summer, with 87% of respondents stating that this was the case. However, UV exposure to the eyes is linked with sun intensity and angle, so exposure in mornings and evenings can have a greater impact than at midday.

Even on cloudy days, up to 80% of invisible UV rays can pass through the clouds, meaning that eye damage is a concern throughout the year, whatever the weather<sup>1</sup>.”

The worrying results certainly appear to turn the biblical saying ‘*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*’ right on its head according to Rosie Gavzey, Optometrist and Director of The Eyecare Trust. She explains: “This research indicates that we are more anxious about losing a tooth than an eye! It’s alarming that so many people in the UK still fail to have their eyes tested on a regular basis, and how little they think about protecting their eyes. Hopefully these results will remind people to pay more attention to eye protection in the future.”

The most convenient and effective way for spectacle wearers to protect their eyes is to wear photochromic lenses such as Transitions lenses which remain clear indoors and at night, but change tint to cut glare when worn outdoors, boosting comfort and reducing eye fatigue. More importantly, they also block 100% UV rays in all light conditions.

They protect the eyes from:

- Glare – automatically adapting to outdoor light intensity, thus enhancing vision quality and preventing squinting and temporary blindness
- Eye fatigue – constantly evening out light variations, ensuring eye comfort all day long
- UV rays – blocking 100% of UVA and UVB rays, helping to preserve eye health and well-being

Roland Allen concludes: “With 93% of photochromic lens wearers stating that they would recommend them to friends and almost every wearer stating that they are happy with their choice (98%)<sup>2</sup>, photochromic lenses are an increasingly popular eye care option. Transitions lenses fit in any frame and can be worn indoors and out. They are the convenient, comfortable and stylish solution to maintaining healthy sight.”

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<sup>1</sup> American Melanoma Foundation

<sup>2</sup> Market Research carried out on behalf of Transitions Optical by Continental Research (312 interviews were conducted with spectacle wearers in Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester and Newcastle) in September 2008

Other key findings from the IPSOS research which reveal misconceptions about risks to eyesight include:

- Only 7% were spontaneously aware that extended exposure to UV rays can cause damage to the eyes<sup>3</sup> but this increased to 75% when prompted.
- Reading in dim light was cited by 65% of respondents as damaging to the eyes whilst 57% said sitting too close to the TV. Both are myths in the sense that whilst they cause eye strain and fatigue and temporarily decrease acuity, this does subside after rest.
- 43% were unaware that poor nutrition can be harmful to the eyes and 55% didn't realise that smoking can also have a detrimental effect.

Visit [www.transitions.com](http://www.transitions.com) for more information and for a 5 day UV forecast in your local area.

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**Note to Editors:**

- This is the fourth annual Healthy Sight Survey commissioned by Transitions Optical, monitoring consumer awareness about eye health issues, carried out with a national representative population of 1000 people aged 18 or over in the UK.

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<sup>3</sup> Healthy Sight Research study carried out on behalf of Transitions Optical by IPSOS Health (survey base of 1001) in April 2008