Protect Your Eyes
By Matthew Roe, O.D., FAAO
Eye Institute

While sunscreen protects our skin, ultraviolet (UV) light can also damage the eyes, most frequently from exposure that occurs prior to age 20 years. Polarized sunglasses with a minimum confirmed rating of UV400 should be worn, especially near water. Prolonged exposure to UV radiation can result in photokeratitis (the equivalent of a sunburned eyeball), as well as retinal damage or cataracts. For more active sports like baseball and soccer, protective eyewear can prevent injuries. Goggles help protect the eyes from irritants in water, such as chlorine, salt, or bacteria. If eyes are red after swimming, over-the-counter, preservative-free artificial tears can help. If your eyes still feel irritated after a couple of hours, see your doctor. Never wear contact lenses in the water—bacteria and other organisms can work their way under contacts and can lead to sight-threatening conditions like corneal ulcers.

When the heat drives us indoors, reduce eye stress to avoid dry, irritated eyes by minimizing exposure to phones, tablets, and computer screens. A condition known as Computer Vision Syndrome can cause eye strain or headaches. Make sure screens are a forearm’s length away, and use the 20-20-20 rule to allow eyes to relax and reset: every 20 minutes, look at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

Remember to schedule annual eye exams for the entire family to keep your eyes healthy.
Prevent Cavities in Children’s Teeth  By Michael Johns, D.D.S., Dental Institute, Pediatrics

Dental cavities are the top chronic disease in children—five times more prevalent than asthma. Current estimates project that more than 50% of children experience tooth decay by age 5 years. Dental pain is a common reason for school absences, and by the time cavities cause pain, treatment options are limited. Yet, cavities are very preventable, and every dollar spent on prevention (toothbrush, toothpaste, check-ups, sealants) can save between $8 and $50 in dental treatment.

It is also important to safeguard “baby” teeth that help kids learn to speak, eat solid foods and receive appropriate nourishment, and hold the space necessary for adult teeth to grow. Permanent teeth (with the exception of the third molars or “wisdom teeth”) come in over a longer period, from around age 6 to 12 years, and sometimes even at age 13 years or later. Some children do not grow all of their permanent teeth, so the baby teeth must hold their place a little longer.

Children should brush every night before bedtime with a toothpaste approved by the American Dental Association (ADA), and regular dental check-ups should be scheduled to assess their oral health and development.