

# Slip, slop, slap . . . and sunnies

STACY THOMAS

WHY aren't schools in NSW introducing sunglasses as part of their uniform?

This is the question which has puzzled Andrew Chang.

The vitreo-retinal specialist at Norwest Eye Clinic can't believe that more schools don't want to embrace a 'slip, slop, slap' approach to ensuring the children of today are aware of what damages can occur.

"I'm not just talking about the sun, but the unexpected incidents that always occur," he said.

"We had a young boy from Riverstone come to us who had been playing golf with his dad. He was waiting behind a tree for the next group to hit off 30m away.

"The golf ball hit his left eye shattering the glasses and cutting his upper lid."

Dr Chang said there was no doubt in his mind that if the boy had not been wearing sunglasses, he would have ruptured his eye.

"This would have resulted in him losing his eye," he said.

"Children have a whole life ahead of them and to think he could have lost it if

he was not wearing sunglasses is scary.

"There are 2.4 million eye injuries every year and 35 per cent of them are 17 years and younger."

The golf ball impact caused a macula hole that was sight threatening but after surgery, his vision was saved.

"Yes you get bruising and cuts, but it's the damage at the back of the eye where all the delicate nerves are," Dr Chang said.

The boy underwent a vitrectomy and gas injection. The micro keyhole surgery took the jelly out from inside his eye and replaced it with a gas bubble which eventually dissipates as the eye repairs.

"It's one thing to be doing surgery on older patients, but when you have someone's sight in your hands when they're a child, it can be overwhelming for families," Dr Chang said.

"If we can prevent it we should be. Schools are the key to prevention of skin cancer and eye damage.

"That's why we're asking schools to consider introducing sunglasses to their uniform. When you think of the alternative, I know which I'd choose."

Norwest Eye Clinic is offering local schools a chance to have their younger students' eyes tested – and they're paying for this service out of their own pocket to educate the next generation.

The clinic has found two companies which can provide wraparound, polarised sunglasses that can be personalised with the child's name and class, ranging in price from \$14.95 to \$18.95. If the sunglasses are broken in 12 months the company replaces them free.

■ Details: 8883 5886.



Dr Andrew Chang in his element – checking a patient's eyes.

Picture: CARMELA ROCHE -PP406391

## NEWS FEATURE

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Should sunglasses be part of the school uniform? Tell us at [blacktownadvocate.com.au](http://blacktownadvocate.com.au)



Eye time: Dr Andrew Chang enjoys some quality time with his young children Iris and Patrick.

Picture: CARMELA ROCHE

## Norwest plan will protect pupils' pupils



Is it time for a test?

Picture: JOHN APPELYARD

**NORWEST** Eye Clinic is offering local schools a chance to have their younger students' eyes tested.

The reason they're paying for this service out of their own pocket is to educate the next generation.

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