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3-D TV and Movies Look to Attract Viewers But Not Everyone Can ‘See’ What All the Hype is About

*Millions of Americans unable to see in 3-D; doctors of optometry say help is available
in the form of vision therapy*

ST. LOUIS, MO, May 18, 2010 — As Hollywood prepares for a summer filled with 3-D blockbuster hopefuls and cable networks launch 3-D networks and programming for newly-released 3-D televisions, the trend towards this new technology is hard to miss—except for the millions of Americans who literally can’t see it.

Movies including “Avatar” and “Alice in Wonderland” have already left their impression on the 3-D screen and new movies using the technology are making their way into theaters across the country. Meanwhile, ESPN and the Discovery Channel are preparing to broadcast in 3-D. This new technology is catching the eyes of fans nationwide, but some people may not be able to enjoy the 3-D experience because of vision problems.

“Quite simply, people who have even a small vision misalignment or those who don’t have equal vision in both eyes may not be able to see 3-D images properly,” said Dr. Leonard Press, chair of the American Optometric Association’s (AOA) Pediatrics and Binocular Vision Committee. “Individuals with unstable focusing or difficulty in coordinating vision with other senses can experience headaches and other uncomfortable side effects from viewing 3-D movies.”

According to the American Optometric Association, anywhere from three to nine million people have problems with binocular vision prohibiting them from watching 3-D TV and movies. Binocular vision is the ability to align both eyes accurately on an object and combine the visual images from each eye into a single, in-depth perception. The problem comes from fatigue caused when 3-D technology forces the eyes to make adjustments to focus simultaneously on images that are near and far away.

Symptoms indicating a potential problem with the ability to see images in 3-D vary from person to person. According to the results of the AOA’s American Eye-Q® survey, the majority of individuals who suffer from 3-D vision complications most often experience headaches (13 percent), blurred vision (12 percent) and dizziness (11 percent).

The AOA recommends seeing a doctor of optometry for further evaluation if consumers answer yes to any of the following questions:

- Is the 3-D viewing experience not as vivid as it is for others watching the same picture?
- Do you experience eyestrain or headaches during or after viewing?
- Do you feel nauseous or dizzy during or after viewing?
- Are you more comfortable viewing 2-D TV or movies instead of 3-D TV/movies?
- Is it difficult for your eyes to adjust back to normal after watching 3-D TV/movies?



“Watching 3-D programming can unmask issues such as lazy eye, convergence insufficiency, poor focusing skills and other visual problems consumers might not have previously known existed,” said Dr. Dominick Maino, a Professor of Pediatrics/Binocular Vision at the Illinois College of Optometry’s Illinois Eye Institute. “Research shows that up to 56 percent of those ages 18 to 38 have symptoms related to a binocular vision problem. It is important to know that studies also show optometric vision therapy can help alleviate these problems and make the experience of watching these movies more enjoyable.”

Optometric vision therapy is a sequence of therapeutic procedures individually prescribed and monitored by an optometrist to develop efficient visual skills and processing. Following a comprehensive eye examination, the optometrist may prescribe vision therapy if the results of the exam indicate a need and if it is determined an appropriate treatment option for the patient. The vision therapy program is based on the results of standardized tests, the needs of the patient, and the patient’s signs and symptoms. Optometric vision therapy re-educates the brain to achieve single, clear, comfortable, two-eyed vision that improves eye coordination, focusing and eye movement, ultimately enhancing the 3-D viewing experience.

The AOA also recommends visiting a doctor of optometry on a regular basis for comprehensive eye exams to help ensure healthy vision overall. The AOA guidelines suggest adults age 60 and under have a comprehensive eye exam every two years and then annually thereafter. Children should be evaluated every other year as long as they are in school. Based on an individual’s eye health or the presence of certain risk factors, your optometrist may recommend more frequent visits.

To find an optometrist in your area, or for additional information please visit the AOA’s Web site at www.AOA.org or the College of Optometry in Vision Development Web site at www.COVD.org.

About the survey:

The fifth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From April 14-21, 2010, using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,007 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population. (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level.)

About the American Optometric Association (AOA):

The American Optometric Association represents approximately 36,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. Optometrists serve patients in nearly 6,500 communities across the country, and in 3,500 of those communities are the only eye doctors. Doctors of optometry provide two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States.

American Optometric Association doctors of optometry are highly qualified, trained doctors on the frontline of eye and vision care who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. In addition to providing eye and vision care, optometrists play a major role in a patient’s overall health and well-being by detecting systemic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.

Prior to optometry school, optometrists typically complete four years of undergraduate study, culminating in a bachelor’s degree. Required undergraduate coursework for pre-optometry students is extensive and covers a wide variety of advanced health, science and mathematics. Optometry school consists of four years of post-graduate, doctoral study concentrating on both the eye and systemic health. In addition to their formal training, doctors of optometry must undergo annual continuing education to stay current on the latest standards of care. For more information, visit www.aoa.org.

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