



Philadelphia Department of Public Health  
**Division of Disease Control**

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***Health Advisory***  
**UV-Induced Photokeratitis Following Exposure to  
Defective Metal Halide Bulb**  
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**SUMMARY POINTS**

- The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) has received at least 14 emergency department reports of eye irritation following activities at a public recreation center in southwestern Philadelphia
- Illness onset ranges from December 26<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>. Common symptoms include eye tearing, burning, itching, and/or photophobia.
- Suspected source is UV-radiation from a defective light bulb in the recreation center
- Please report suspected cases of eye irritation or photokeratitis to PDPH by calling 215-685-6742 or 215-686-4514 after hours

Since December 26<sup>th</sup> 2013 the Philadelphia Department of Public Health has received a number of reports of eye irritation among adolescents and young adults following activities at a public recreation center in southwestern Philadelphia. As of today, 14 such cases have presented at local hospital emergency departments and clinics. Symptom onset dates range from December 26 through December 31, 2013.

The most commonly reported symptoms included eye tearing, burning, itching, and/or photophobia. Other symptoms reported include foreign body sensation and visual blurring. Findings on ophthalmological examination are consistent with photokeratitis. Eye irritation can be alleviated using gentle saline lavage, cold compresses, or artificial tears. The presence of symptoms beyond eye or skin irritation is suggestive of a different diagnosis.

The cause of photokeratitis in these recent cases is likely to have been exposure to UV-radiation from a high intensity metal halide bulb with fractured outer casing that was found at the recreation facility. The issue has now been remediated.

Healthcare professionals should report all cases of suspected photokeratitis or eye irritation that might be related to recent recreational activities at a gymnasium in southwest Philadelphia. Please notify the Division of Disease Control at 215-685-6742, so that public health investigation and disease control measures can be initiated promptly. After normal business hours and on weekends, call 215-686-4514 and ask for the person on-call for the Division.

For general information on UV radiation-induced burns from lighting, see  
<http://www.fda.gov/Radiation-EmittingProducts/RadiationSafety/AlertsandNotices/ucm116540.htm>

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