



## April is Sports Eye Safety Month

### Quick Facts

The long-term health benefits of sports are clear: they provide good exercise for maintaining a healthy weight, improve strength and coordination, and help build lifelong healthy habits and social skills. For more than 40,000 people each year, there are health risks in playing sports, including eye injuries.

- Eye injuries are the leading cause of blindness in children in the United States.
- Most injuries in school-aged children are sports-related.
- Ninety percent of sports-related eye injuries can be avoided with the use of protective eyewear.
- Baseball and basketball account for the largest number of injuries.
- Little League pitchers may throw the ball up to 70 mph - fast enough to break bones and seriously injure the eye.
- Many other popular sports present risk, especially tennis, soccer, football, golf, water sports, and hockey.

Currently, most youth sports leagues do not require the use of eye protection. Parents and coaches must insist that children wear safety glasses or goggles whenever they play.

### Types of Injuries

Injuries range from corneal abrasions, eyelid bruises, and internal eye injuries, such as retinal detachments and internal bleeding. Many of these injuries lead to vision loss and permanent blindness.

### Prevention

Protective eyewear includes safety glasses and goggles, safety shields, and eye guards designed for a particular sport. Ordinary prescription glasses, contact lenses, and sunglasses do not protect against eye injuries.

Protective eyewear, which is made of ultra-strong polycarbonate, is 10 times more impact resistant than other plastics, and does not reduce vision. All athletes should use protective eyewear, not just those who wear eyeglasses or contact lenses.

Safety goggles should be worn over eyeglasses or contact lenses. Today, most protective eyewear can be made to match vision correction prescriptions, so ask your eye care professional about your options. It is especially important for athletes who have vision in only one eye or a history of eye injury or eye surgery to use protective eyewear.

When participating in sports, be sure to wear protective eyewear that is:

- Appropriate for the sport;
- Has polycarbonate lenses or shields;
- Is properly fitted by an eye care professional.

For additional information, visit the National Institutes of Health at <http://www.nih.gov>.