

Play Hard ... Play Safe

From major league stadiums to small-town courts, America's favorite pastimes make great memories for many. But for more than 40,000 athletes, those memories are ruined by eye injuries, the vast majority of which were preventable.

In recognition of April's designation as Sports Eye Safety Month, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Eye M.D.s across the nation urge all athletes to wear appropriate protective eyewear.

Athletes need to choose protective eyewear because eye injuries can be devastating - not just career ending, but life changing. Eye injuries are one of the leading causes of visual impairment in children. Children can end up with injuries ranging from abrasions of the cornea and bruises of the lids to internal eye injuries such as retinal detachments and internal bleeding. Unfortunately, some of these athletes end up with permanent vision loss and blindness.

Athletes can now choose from various types of sturdy, lightweight, effective and fashionable eyewear. And when they have polycarbonate lenses and have been properly fitted by an eye care professional, eyewear does not hinder performance and can prevent 90 percent of sports eye injuries.

Basketball, football, hockey and baseball aren't the only sports that contribute to the thousands of eye injuries suffered each year. Soccer, tennis, golf and water sports also are dangerous to the eyes. Each of these sports require a different type of protective eyewear, so see an Eye M.D. or other eye care professional for eyewear appropriate for your sport.

The long-term benefits of playing sports are clear, but sports are the leading cause of eye injuries in children. Most sporting leagues don't require their young athletes to wear eye protection, yet when they do, the occurrence of eye injuries is greatly reduced. So, until mandatory eye protection comes to your child's sporting league, it's up to you to lobby for and protect your young athlete.

If you play sports, you can get hurt. Whatever you're game, whatever your age so protect your eyes with appropriate protective eyewear.

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