

Young Athletes Need Eye Protection Year-Round

(MS) — The number of kids playing organized sports is on the rise and so to is the number of sports-related injuries. What many players, parents and coaches do not realize is that the majority of injuries occur during practice and not during games, making it crucial that kids wear protective equipment for practices and games alike. More than 90 percent of all eye injuries can be prevented with the use of appropriate protective eyewear, says Prevent Blindness America.

Today, protective eyewear is becoming commonplace for any kid who picks up a ball, stick, racquet, or dives into sports play. In fact, without having to worry about eye injuries, both players and parents can focus more intently on game play and — of course — winning.

While protection should be worn no matter the sport, here are a few of the more hazardous sports out there.

Autumn

Soccer: Because soccer players are always moving, be sure to have all eyewear fitted individually. Protective eyewear has straps that will feature some sizing flexibility, so resist the urge to buy a larger size that kids can “grow into.” Re-evaluate sizing every year.

Football: A very high contact sport, eye injuries can occur but aren't as common due to face protection offered by helmets. Still, eye protection can be fitted under helmets, offering additional protection against debris and potential finger pokes.

Winter

Basketball: Basketball is the leading cause of eye injury for players ages 15 to 24. Research shows that 1 in 10 college basketball players will suffer an eye injury each season. According to the National Society to Prevent Blindness, almost 7,000 injuries were found to be related to playing basket-



Eye protection is essential for young athletes all through the year.

ball. Finger poking is one of the more common basketball injuries nationwide. Sports protective eyewear, however, can help hardwood heroes avoid the perils of eye injury.

Spring

Baseball/Softball: Baseball is the leading cause of eye injury in players 14 and under. This ranks baseball among the highest sports for eye injury risks. Players are contending with a high-speed projectile (the ball), swinging bats and potential sun glare. That's a recipe for eye injuries. Regular shades or other “street” eyewear won't provide proper protection. Due to the potential velocity of a baseball or softball, nothing can guarantee complete injury protection, but sports protective eyewear can greatly lessen the risk of serious injury. The lenses are made from polycarbonate, which are impact-resistant and have inherent UV protection.

Lacrosse: Men's and women's lacrosse differ in regard to how much physical contact is allowed, with the men's teams being more contact-heavy. Still, some form of stick checking and blows from lacrosse balls make sports eye protection a smart idea for players. The most common head/facial injuries seen are contusions about the face and eye orbit, creating the typical “black eye.” This primarily occurs in women's games because of the lack of a hard helmet. Therefore, sports eye protection is mandatory for all players.

Summer

Tennis and other racquet sports: In a Canadian study, racquet sports accounted for 24.5 percent of all reported eye injuries and 8.8 percent of all eyes blinded by sports. In a U.S. study, racquet sports were responsible for 40.3 percent of sports eye injuries seen in a private practice, and 23 percent of all admissions for hyphema (bleeding inside of the eye) to the Massachusetts Ear and Eye Infirmary. The high speed at which balls are served or struck during these sports can make eye trauma common, even though many people do not associate these sports with injury.

Shopping for Eye Protection

Liberty Sport provides a line of high-quality protective sports eyewear. They are tested to withstand the ASTM F803 impact resistant standards for racquetball, basketball, handball, squash, paddleball, soccer, and tennis when fitted with the appropriate polycarbonate lenses. They're also the only protective sports eyewear to receive the American Optometric Seal of Acceptance. Additionally, almost all corrective lens prescriptions can be incorporated into stylish sports protective eyewear. To learn more, visit www.libertysport.com.

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