

Hey Kids: Protect Your Eyes During Sports Play

(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. Proper protection for these athletes should include not only helmets, knee and elbow pads and mouth guards, but protective eyewear as well.

More than 600,000 eye injuries related to sports and recreation occur each year. Of these injuries, 42,000 require a trip to the Emergency Room, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Flying objects are just one of the hazards of sports. A large number of injuries occur from finger pokes and jabs from arms and elbows. Throw together a couple of overzealous players and a potential collision could occur. Even sports that seem relatively harmless can actually be harmful to the eyes.

But more than 90 percent of all eye injuries can be prevented with the use of appropriate protective eyewear, says Prevent Blindness America. And proper hygiene and vision care, such as yearly examinations and proper cleaning of glasses and contact lenses can ensure that kids protect one of their most valuable tools ... their vision.

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.

Whether a child is an after-school jock or a weekend warrior, here's a listing of some of the popular seasonal sports activities that present a risk for injury, which can become much safer with protective eyewear.

Autumn

Soccer: Soccer is tremendously popular among today's boys and girls, and chances are most households boast at least one soccer player. Because soccer players are always moving, be sure to have all eyewear fitted individually. Protective



Courtesy of Prevent Blindness America

Soccer is just one of the many sports children enjoy that can be made safer with sports eye protection.

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 basketball. 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.