

SPORTS RELATED EYE INJURIES

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Many people experience sports and recreation-related eye injuries each year. In fact, the number is estimated to be around 100,000 with approximately 42,000 going to the ER for treatment. Sports-related injuries cause over 13,000 people to go blind yearly and is the leading cause of blindness in children in the United States. Sports can have a low, high, and very high risk of eye injury. Low-risk sports do not use a ball, puck, bat, stick, and do not involve body contact. Some include swimming, gymnastics, and cycling. High-risk sports involve what low-risk sports do not and include sports such as baseball, basketball, hockey, football, lacrosse, tennis, and water polo. Very high risk does not use eye protectors and involve full body contact such as boxing, wrestling, and contact martial arts. Protective eyewear includes goggles and safety glasses, safety shields and eye guards designed for a particular sport. Most frequent injuries involve baseball, basketball and racquet sports. The good news is that about 90% of serious eye injuries are preventable by using appropriate protective eyewear.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES INCLUDE:

- Your Osteopathic Family physician should examine you before you play sports and can help you choose eye protection for your specific sport
- Tell your doctor if you have any family history of retinal problems or if you have any eye problems. If any risk factors are present, an ophthalmologist should check you before doing any very high or high-risk sports
- Regular eyeglasses, sunglasses, and contacts do not protect your eyes from blunt injuries
- Protective eyewear is made of ultra-strong material. They are about 10x more impact resistant than normal plastic and do not reduce vision
- All participating athletes should wear protective eyewear, not only those who wear prescription glasses or contacts
- Most protective eyewear can match your prescription if needed
- Currently, most youth sports leagues do not require the use of eye protection. Parents and coaches must strongly encourage that children wear safety eyewear whenever they play and encourage sports leagues to adopt a policy on protective eyewear.
- Choose eye protectors that meet or exceed the standards of the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM)

MEDICAL CARE & TREATMENT OPTIONS:

If an eye injury occurs, please call your Osteopathic Family Physician immediately. If you are unable to reach your Family Physician call 911 or go to the emergency room, even if the eye injury appears to be minor. Any delay in medical treatment can potentially result in permanent vision impairment, loss, or even blindness.

SOURCE(S): American Academy of Family Physicians, National Eye Institute, American Academy of Ophthalmology

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