

Eye Safety For Children

Accidents resulting in eye injuries can happen to anyone. But the fact is, over half of the victims are under the age of 25. Many of these injuries, over 100,000 annually, occur during sports or recreational activities. Perhaps the most startling statistic of all is that 90% of all eye injuries could have been prevented. Parents are advised to acquaint themselves with potentially dangerous situations at home and in school and to insist that their children use protective eyewear when participating in sports or any hazardous activities.

Children and Sports

Increasing numbers of children are participating in sports at an early age. It is the responsibility of the parents and coaches to provide protective eyewear and enforce its use. Some sports in which children should be made to use protective eyewear are:

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Baseball

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Basketball

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Racquetball

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Tennis

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Soccer

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Hockey

Contact lenses are not a form of eyewear protection and contact lens wearers require additional protection when participating in sports. In baseball, hockey, and lacrosse, a helmet with a polycarbonate face mask or wire shield should always be worn. It is important that hockey face masks be approved by the

Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC) or Sports goggles with polycarbonate lenses and side shields should be worn when participating in basketball, racquetball, tennis and soccer.

While skiing, protective glasses or goggles that filter out U.V. (Ultra Violet) and excessive sunlight exposure can be useful in shielding the eyes from sunburn. Boxing poses an extremely high risk of serious and even blinding eye injury. No adequate protection is available although thumbless gloves may reduce the number of eye injuries.

Parents of a child with permanently reduced vision in one eye should carefully consider the risks of contact sports and injury to the good eye before allowing their child to participate.

Eye safety at home and in the yard

To provide the safest environment for your children:
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Select games and toys that are appropriate for your child's age and responsibility level.
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Provide adequate supervision and instruction when your children are handling potentially dangerous items, such as pencils, scissors and pen knives. Be aware that even common household items such as paper clips, elastic cords, wire coat hangers, rubber bands and fishhooks can cause serious eye injury.
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Avoid projectile toys such as darts and bows and arrows. Do not allow your children to play with air powered rifles, pellet guns. They are extremely dangerous and have been reclassified as firearms and removed from toy departments.
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Keep all chemicals and sprays out of reach of small children.
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Do not allow children to ignite fireworks or stand near others who are doing so. All fireworks are potentially dangerous for children of any age.

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Do not allow children in the yard while a lawnmower is being operated. Stones and debris thrown from moving blades can cause severe eye injuries.

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Demonstrate the use of protective eyewear to children by always wearing protective eyewear yourself while using power tools, rotary mowers, line lawn trimmers or hammering on metal.

Eye safety in school

When participating in shop or some science labs, students should wear protective goggles.

General eye safety for children

Children with good vision in only one eye should wear safety glasses to protect the good eye even if they do not need glasses otherwise. These lenses should be made of polycarbonate (an especially strong, shatterproof, lightweight plastic) and be 3 mm thick. Choosing a plastic or polycarbonate frame will reduce the risk of injury from the frames themselves. Frames which meet the ANSI standards offer the best available protection for general spectacle wear. Prescription lenses can be fitted into some types of sports goggles, but frames without any lenses do not provide adequate protection.

When an eye injury does occur, it is always best to have an ophthalmologist (eye physician and surgeon), or other medical doctor examine the eye as soon as possible. The seriousness of an eye injury may not be immediately obvious.