



Children's Sports and Eye Safety

According to a recent report, approximately 30 percent of eye injuries among children under 16 are sports related. And yet, 90 percent of those injuries are preventable.

Children are particularly susceptible to eye injuries because of their underdeveloped depth perception, fearless style of play and athletic immaturity. The American Optometric Association (AOA) recommends that children wear eye protection for the following sports and recreational activities: baseball; softball; racquetball; tennis; badminton; soccer; ice hockey; street hockey; basketball; lacrosse; archery; fencing; boxing; and karate.

Here's a look at the most popular youth sports and the AOA's recommended protective eyewear:

Baseball/Softball

Offensive statistic:	Baseball is the leading cause of sports-related eye injuries in children. To date, Maryland is the only state that requires children 16 and under to wear batting helmets with protective face shields when playing baseball.
Best defense:	Polycarbonate face guard attached to helmet.
Eye injuries prevented:	Corneal abrasions (scratches on the cornea); inflamed iris, hyphema (bleeding in the eye's anterior chamber); traumatic cataract; swollen retina.

Soccer

Offensive statistic:	Fifty percent of soccer eye injuries resulted in hyphema.
Best defense:	Polycarbonate goggles.
Eye injuries prevented:	Swollen retina; inflamed iris; hyphema.

Basketball

Offensive statistic:	More than 193,000 children ages 5 to 14 were treated in hospital emergency rooms for basketball-related injuries in 2000.
Best defense:	Polycarbonate goggles.
Eye injuries prevented:	Fracture of the eye socket; corneal abrasions; inflamed iris; hyphema; swollen retina.

Football

Offensive statistic:	None. Football eye injuries have been reduced 90 percent.
Best defense:	A facemask with a polycarbonate shield over the opening of the mask.
Eye injuries prevented:	Corneal abrasions; inflamed iris; hyphema.

Ice Hockey

Offensive statistic:	Ice hockey is the second leading cause of winter sports injury among children.
Best defense:	A facemask with a polycarbonate shield on helmet.
Eye injuries prevented:	Corneal abrasions; inflamed iris; hyphema; swollen retina. There have been severe blinding and disfiguring traumas in hockey. The head and eyes must be completely protected.

When Shopping for Children's Sports Eyewear Protection:

- Do expect to pay between \$35 and \$100 for protective eyewear and at least \$80 to \$120 for eyewear with prescription lenses.
- Do purchase eyewear at sports specialty or optical stores.
- Don't buy eyewear without lenses.
- Do make sure the eyewear fits comfortably and securely and can fit on a helmet if necessary.
- Do check the packaging to see if the eyewear is comprised of polycarbonate and has been approved by the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM).

Statistical information provided by Prevent Blindness America and the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission.

Help get the word out about children's vision care. Join the Back-in-School Program.

