

Tips for Buying Sports Eye Protectors

More than 31,000 people a year suffer eye injuries related to sports activities. Using the right kind of eye protection while playing sports can help prevent serious eye injuries and even blindness.

Prevent Blindness recommends that athletes wear sports eyeguards when participating in sports. Prescription glasses, sunglasses and even occupational safety glasses do not provide adequate protection.

Sports eyeguards come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Eyeguards designed for use in racquet sports are now commonly used for basketball and soccer and in combination with helmets in football, hockey and baseball. The eyeguards you choose should fit securely and comfortably, and allow the use of a helmet if necessary.

Guidelines for buying the right sports eyeguards for you

- > If you wear prescription glasses, ask your eye doctor to fit you for prescription eyeguards. If you're a monocular athlete (a person with only one eye that sees well), ask your eye doctor what sports you can play safely. Monocular athletes should always wear sports eyeguards.
- > Buy eyeguards at sports specialty stores or optical stores. At the sports store, ask for a salesperson who is familiar with eye protectors to help you.
- > Don't buy sports eyeguards without lenses in them. Only protectors with lenses are recommended for sports use. Make sure the lenses either stay in place or pop outward in the event of an accident. Lenses that pop in against your eyes can be very dangerous.

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Tips for Buying Sports Eye Protectors—Continued

- > Fogging of the lenses can be a problem when you're active. Some eyeguards are available with anti-fog coating and others include side vents for additional ventilation. Try on different types to determine which is right for you.
- > Polycarbonate eyeguards are the most impact resistant. For sports use, polycarbonate lenses must be used with protectors that meet or exceed the requirements of ASTM International, a global standards development organization. Each sport has a specific ASTM code, so check the package to make sure the right ASTM label for the sport is on the product, before buying it.
- > In order to be assured that your eyes are protected, it is important that any eye guard or sports protective eyewear that you buy have on its packaging that it is ASTM F803 approved. This eyewear is performance tested to give you the highest levels of protection.
- > Sports eyeguards should be padded or cushioned along the brow and bridge of the nose. Padding will prevent the eyeguards from cutting your skin.
- > Try on the eye protector to determine if it's the right size. Adjust the strap and make sure it's not too tight or too loose. If you bought your eyeguards at an optical store, an optical salesperson can help you adjust the eye protector for a comfortable fit.

Until you get used to wearing a pair of eyeguards, it may feel strange, but bear with it. It's a lot better than suffering an eye injury — an injury that could possibly lead to the loss of vision!

