



Children's Eye Safety

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Kids need to keep their eyes safe at home, at school, at play and in sports. Otherwise, a lifetime of good vision is at risk.

Every year, thousands of children have eye injuries. But 9 out of 10 of those injuries could have been prevented! Here are ways to keep your child's eyes safe.

Sports and eye safety

More kids than ever are playing sports at an early age. Protective eyewear is very important in the following sports:

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Boxing
- Football
- Hockey (including ice, street, roller and field)
- Lacrosse
- Paintball or while using air-powered BB guns
- Racquet sports
- Skiing
- Soccer
- Wrestling



Protective sports eyewear

Each of these sports requires its own kind of protective eyewear:

- **Ice hockey, lacrosse, batting in baseball:** Children should wear a helmet with a polycarbonate (strong, shatterproof, lightweight plastic) face mask or wire shield. Hockey face masks must be approved by the Hockey Equipment Certification Council or Canadian Standards Association.
- **Basketball, tennis, soccer, field hockey, fielding in baseball:** Choose protective eyewear approved by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) or Canadian Standards Association.

- **Snow or water skiing:** Children should wear glasses or goggles with UV protection to shield their eyes from sunburn and glare.

Currently there is no specific eye protection approved for **boxing and full-contact martial arts**. But thumbless gloves may help to prevent some eye injuries.



Children should wear sports eye protectors when participating in a number of sports, including baseball.

A prescription for safety . . .

If your child wears prescription eyeglasses, talk with his or her eye doctor about fitting those prescription lenses into protective eyewear.

Also, remember that contact lenses provide no eye protection. Contact lens wearers need eye protection when participating in sports.

Eye safety at home

Set the tone for eye safety at home. Skip the toys or games that have darts, pellets, or other dangerous flying pieces. Keep in mind that even things you think are safe can cause eye injury. These include paper clips, bungee cords, wire coat hangers, rubber bands and fishhooks. Watch closely when your child is using them. Finally, always set a good example for kids by wearing eye protection yourself.

Inside . . .

- Teach your child to use sharp or pointed objects safely, such as pencils, scissors, and forks.
- Keep spray bottles and cleaning supplies out of the reach of small children. Supplies include bleach, window washing fluid, and kitchen or bathroom cleaners.

Outside . . .

- Keep children away when you mow the lawn. Pebbles and stones often shoot from the mower and cause severe eye injuries. Always wear protective eyewear when you use lawn mowers, trimmers, saws or other tools that can cause eye injuries. Kids learn by your example.
- Do not let children light fireworks or stand near people who light them. Among those who suffer eye injuries from fireworks, 1 out of 4 of them loses vision permanently.
- Avoid letting children play with pellet guns or BB guns. They are now classified as "firearms" and have been removed from toy departments.

Eye safety at school

Students need to protect their eyes in certain classes at school. This includes classes where practical skills such as carpentry and metal work are taught. It also includes certain science labs, such as chemistry. Protective goggles or eye shields for these classes should be approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). These will be marked (ANSI) Z87.1.

Protect remaining sight when some vision has been lost.

Ophthalmologists strongly recommend that children with good vision in only one eye wear protective eyeglasses. This is recommended even if the child does not otherwise need glasses.

When buying eyeglasses, make sure they have non-breakable frames and safety lenses made from polycarbonate. Polycarbonate lenses should be at least 2 millimeters thick for daily wear and 3 millimeters thick for sports.

If an eye injury does happen, see an ophthalmologist or other medical doctor right away. Keep in mind that you may not be able to tell if the injury is serious. Getting diagnosed and treated quickly could save your child's vision.

Summary

It is estimated that 9 out of 10 eye injuries in kids could have been prevented.

Protective eyewear is crucial in many sports. There are certain types of goggles or glasses to look for, depending on the sport. If your child wears prescription eyeglasses, those prescription lenses can be fit into protective eyewear.

At home, try to avoid having toys with flying pieces. Keep cleaning and spray products out of children's reach. And use protective eyewear when mowing, trimming or using tools. In school, eye protection is required in "shop" classes like carpentry, as well as in science labs like chemistry.

Kids that have good vision in only one eye are urged to wear protective eyeglasses. Eyeglasses should always have non-breakable frames and polycarbonate lenses.

Any eye injury should be checked by an ophthalmologist or medical doctor right away. Quick diagnosis and treatment could save vision.

Get more information about children's eye safety from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology—at aao.org/childrens-eyes-link.

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