



211 West Wacker Drive  
Suite 1700  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

toll free 800.331.2020  
local 312.363.6001  
fax 312.363.6052

[preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For more information:**  
Prevent Blindness America  
Sarah Hecker  
(312) 363-6035  
[shecker@preventblindness.org](mailto:shecker@preventblindness.org)

## **Stay in the Game, Protect Your Eyes While Playing Sports**

***- Prevent Blindness America Urges Athletes of Any Age to Care for Their Eyes by Wearing Proper Eye Protection -***

**CHICAGO (Aug. 23, 2011)** – Every year, more than 40,000 athletes suffer an eye injury while playing sports. And, every 13 minutes, an emergency room in the United States treats a sports-related eye injury. Adults and children can protect their vision while playing sports by wearing the proper eye protection. Prevent Blindness America has dedicated September as Sports Eye Safety Awareness Month to encourage everyone to make eye safety part of the game plan.

Polycarbonate lenses must be used with protectors that meet or exceed the requirements of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). Each sport has a specific ASTM code. Polycarbonate eyewear is 10 times more impact resistant than other plastics, according to the National Eye Institute. There is no evidence that wearing eye protection hampers athletic performance.

Eye injuries can include painful corneal abrasions, blunt trauma and penetrating injuries, inflamed iris, fracture of the eye socket, swollen or detached retinas, traumatic cataract and blood spilling into the eye's anterior chamber. The consequences of eye injury can range from temporary to permanent vision loss and even blindness.

Any athletes who have poor vision or blindness in one eye should take particular care to protect their remaining vision. Yet, many forgo eye protection. According to a recent survey conducted by researchers at the Ohio State University, only 21 percent of college football programs required the use of a faceshield in players with poor vision in one eye, while a mere 20 percent recommended faceshields.

“Whether it be goggles for basketball or faceshields for football players, everyone must make eye protection part of their uniform,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “And we can’t stress enough how important it is for those who have diminished or no vision in one eye to protect their healthy eye while playing sports. An eye accident can happen in a split second yet impact the rest of your life.”

Prevent Blindness America provides the following guidelines for purchasing the best eye protection:

- If you wear prescription glasses, ask your eye doctor to fit you for prescription protective sports eyewear.
- If you're a monocular athlete, ask your eye doctor what sports you can safely participate in. Monocular athletes should **always** wear sports eye protectors.
- Fogging of the lenses can be a problem. Some eye protectors are available with anti-fog coating. Others have side vents for additional ventilation. Try on different types to determine which is most comfortable.
- Check the packaging to see if the eye protector has been tested for sports use. Also check to see that the eye protector is made of polycarbonate material. Polycarbonate eyeguards are the most impact resistant.
- Sports eye protectors should be padded or cushioned along the brow and bridge of the nose. Padding will prevent them from cutting the 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.
- For outdoor sports, look for eye protection that blocks harmful UV rays.

In an ongoing effort to educate children and their parents on the importance of sports eye injury protection, Prevent Blindness America, The Coalition to Prevent Sports Eye Injuries and Liberty Sport, Inc., have embarked on the second year of the "September is Sports Eye Injury Prevention Awareness Month" campaign. The program provides free educational materials to eye care professionals, specifically those who are Sports Eye Injury Prevention Centers.

For more information on sports eye injury prevention and information on sport-specific eye protection recommendations, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020, or visit [preventblindness.org/sports-eye-safety](http://preventblindness.org/sports-eye-safety).

### **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, Prevent Blindness America is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).

###