

TIPS FOR BUYING SPORTS EYE PROTECTORS

Last year hospital emergency rooms treated nearly 40,000 victims of sport related eye injuries. Because some injuries are seen and treated at outpatient clinics, the actual number of eye injuries may be two or more times greater than the reported estimate!

The National Society to Prevent Blindness (NSPB) recommends that athletes wear eye guards when participating in sports. Prescription glasses, sunglasses and even occupational safety glasses don't provide adequate protection.

Sports eye guards come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Eye guards 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 eye guards you choose should fit securely and comfortably and allow the use of a helmet if necessary.

The following guidelines can help you find a pair of eye guards right for you:

- If you wear prescription glasses, ask your eye doctor to fit you with prescription eye guards. If you're a monocular athlete (a person with only one good seeing eye) ask your eye doctor what sports you can safely participate in. Monocular athletes should always wear eye guards.
- Buy eye guards at sports specialty stores or optical stores. At the sporting goods stores, ask for a sales representative who's familiar with eye protectors to help you.
- Don't buy sports eye guards without lenses in them. Only "lensed" protectors 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 our eyes can be very dangerous.
- Fogging of the lenses can be a problem when you're active. Some eye guards are available with anti-fog coating and others include "holes" for additional ventilation. Try on different types to determine which is most comfortable for you.
- Check the packaging to see if the eye protector you select has been tested for sports use. Also check to see that the eye protector is made of polycarbonate material. Polycarbonate eye guards are the most impact resistant.
- Sports eye guards should be padded or cushioned along the brow and bridge of the nose. Padding will prevent the eye guards 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. Until you get used to wearing a pair of eye guards, it may feel strange, but bear with it! It's a lot more comfortable than an eye injury.