

Healthy Habits

April 2007

Tips for reaching and maintaining your optimum state of health

April is Sports Eye Safety Month

Spring Has Sprung!

With the change in the weather, many children and adults alike will enjoy the warm climate outdoors by playing sports. Whether in a league or just joining friends for a friendly game, however, there is a danger lurking. An estimated 40,000 sports eye injuries occur every year. The majority of victims are children; too many of whom suffer permanent visual impairment.

Are You Ready For Some Football?

No parent could imagine sending their child out onto a football field without the proper helmet and pads -- they wouldn't be protected! Without proper eyewear, many little league athletes playing football, basketball and baseball are left vulnerable to an injury more devastating than a broken bone. While a cast can set a bone and it may heal even stronger than before, many eye injuries cause a reduction or loss of vision that can never be repaired or replaced. Many other popular sports, such as tennis, soccer, and lacrosse, also put unprotected players at risk for serious eye injury.

Is Protective Eyewear a Hindrance?

In 1974, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar of the National Basketball Association (NBA) suffered a scratch to his cornea during an in-game collision. Realizing that a similar injury could end his young career, Abdul-Jabbar returned to the court with the protective goggles that would become his trademark. Fifteen years and five world championships later, he retired as the NBA's all-time leading scorer and shotblocker, amongst other records. National Football League (NFL) player Eric Dickerson similarly wore protective eyewear throughout his career and finished as one of the all-time greats, evidenced by his 1999 election to the Professional Football Hall of Fame.



Take the time to protect your eyes. Consult your eye doctor about eyewear that's right for your sport.

Keep Your Eye on the Ball...the Safe Way.

Little League pitchers may throw the ball up to 70 mph -- fast enough to cause serious eye damage. In basketball, errant elbows and fingers can cause damage to a player's eyes while dribbling or shooting. Still, studies have shown that more than 90 percent of eye injuries can be prevented by wearing the right protective eyewear. While your eye doctor can recommend the appropriate eyewear for your sport here are a few tips to remember:

- Most protective eyewear, including goggles, faceshields and guards should be made of strong polycarbonate plastic.
- Protective eyewear must be properly fitted by an eye care professional.
- Everyday glasses and contacts **do not** offer enough protection for sports and may even increase the level of injury.

Many children's sports leagues and schools don't require children to wear eye protection at all. It's up to parents and guardians to ensure that their children wear proper eye protection every time they play and set a good example by wearing eye protection themselves. Now, play ball!

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