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Protect Your Eyes While Playing Sports

In 2025, more than 44,000 people were treated for eye injuries related to sports activities. The good news is that many of these injuries could have been minimized or prevented by wearing the right protective eyewear while playing sports.

Prevent Blindness recommends that athletes wear activity-specific eye protection when participating in sports. Prescription glasses, sunglasses, contact lenses, and even occupational safety glasses do not provide adequate protection for sports eyewear. Sports eye protection is stronger and doesn't break as easily as regular glasses. **Choose the protective eyewear recommended for your sports activity to reduce risk of eye injury.**

Why is Sports Eye Protection Important?

Eye injuries can happen in an instant. Balls, pucks, racquets, paddles, bats, sticks, elbows, and fingers can all cause serious damage to the eye. Some eye injuries include:

- Scratches to the cornea (the clear front part of the eye)
- Inflammation of the eye
- Bleeding in or around the eye
- Cataract due to trauma
- Retinal injuries
- Broken bones around the eye
- Vision loss



Recommended Sports Eye Protectors

<https://preventblindness.org/recommended-sports-eye-protectors>

How to Choose the Right Sports Eye Protection?

- Choose your eye protection based on the sport activity
- Use polycarbonate lenses (most impact resistant material)
- Ensure it meets the appropriate ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) standard for your sport
- Ensure it fits properly and comfortably
- If needed, verify it is compatible with your helmet or other protective equipment
- Make sure it is not damaged or scratched
- Follows your sport organization's equipment rules

An eye care professional can help you choose the best option that meets your needs, especially if you wear prescription lenses.

Tips for Buying Sports Safety Eyewear

<https://preventblindness.org/tips-for-buying-sports-eye-protectors>

Note: Some sports require more than just protective eyewear to protect your face and head. For example, **helmet-mounted face guards, face shields, or face cages** may also be recommended or required depending on the sport, age of the player, and league rules.

What is ASTM?

American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) International develops safety standards for protective sports eyewear. Products that meet the appropriate ASTM standard have been tested to help reduce the risk of eye injuries during specific sports.

<https://store.astm.org/products-services/standards-and-publications/standards/sports-standards-and-recreation-standards.html#section16>

What is NOCSEA?

NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) is the national organization that sets the safety standards for protective sports equipment — like helmets and faceguards — to help reduce the risk of sports related head and face injuries.

Recommended Eye Protection for Sports *(continued)*

SPORT*	RECOMMENDED PROTECTION	EYE PROTECTION STANDARD	HELMET/FACE GUARD STANDARD
Airsoft	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F2879-22R26	ASTM F3398-21R26 for face and ear protective devices
Baseball/Softball (Batter)	Sports goggles or glasses (if needed) plus batting helmet	ASTM F803-25	NOCSAE ND072 ASTM F910-04(2023) (youth baseball face guards attached to helmets)
Baseball and Softball (Fielder)	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F803-25	NOCSAE ND029: Optional add to headgear
Basketball	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F803-25	N/A
Field Hockey	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F2713-21	NOCSAE ND061 (Goalkeepers should wear helmets with full face protection)
Football	Helmet with face mask	N/A	NOCSAE ND087
Handball	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F3603-23	N/A
Ice Hockey	Helmet with full face shield/cage	ASTM F513-22	NOCSAE ND035 (All hockey eye and face protectors should have The Hockey Equipment Certification Council http://hecc.org (HECC) approval label)
Lacrosse (Men's)	Helmets/face protectors	N/A	ND041 for integrated helmets with faceguards ND045 for standalone face protectors
Lacrosse (Women's)	Sports goggles or glasses and headgear/ helmets optional except for goalies	ASTM F3077-25	ASTM F3137-15(2022) Standard Specification for Headgear Used in Women's Lacrosse (excluding Goalkeepers)
Paintball	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F1776-26	N/A
Pickleball	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F3164-24	N/A
Racquetball	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F3164-24	N/A
Squash	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F3164-24	N/A
Soccer	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F803-25	N/A
Tennis	Sports goggles or glasses	ASTM F3164-24	N/A

****Always follow your league's equipment rules in addition to national safety standards.***

¹ Prevent Blindness (2026). Sports-Related Eye Injuries by Age Group – 2025. Retrieved August 13, 2026, from <https://preventblindness.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/FS09-Sports-Eye-Injuries-by-Age-2025.pdf>