

## PROTECT YOUR EYES—WEAR SUNGLASSES YEAR ROUND



McDowell Mountain Little League Safety Officer Dr. Jeffrey L. Girardin, encourages residents to protect their eyes during the baseball season and all year. “The sun’s damaging effects are a concern year round regardless of what the temperature is outside,” said Dr. Girardin, an optometrist with Horizon Eye Specialists & LASIK Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

In addition to visible light, the sun gives off ultraviolet radiation. This radiation is divided into three types: UV-A, UV-B, and UV-C. The earth’s ozone layer absorbs UV-C radiation, leaving sunglasses to protect against UV-A and UV-B rays.

Studies indicate that long-term exposure to UV-A and UV-B can contribute to the development of cataracts; retinal problems; benign growths on the eye’s surface; cancer of the eyelids and skin around the eyes; and photokeratitis, a temporary but painful sunburn of the eye’s surface.

“The sun’s brightness creates a disabling glare that interferes with comfortable vision and the ability to see clearly,” adds Dr. Girardin. It causes eyes to squint and to water. This glare occurs on cloudy as well as sunny days. On snowy days, sunglasses reduce the reflected glare that occurs when the sun’s light bounces off snow.

The best protection against the sun’s damaging rays is consistent use of sunglasses. Use the following tips when selecting your next pair of sunglasses. For optimum sun protection, the sunglasses should:

- ♦ Block out 99-100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation
- ♦ Screen out 75-90 percent of visible light (fashion-tinted lenses usually do not meet this level)
- ♦ Be perfectly matched in color and free of distortion and imperfection
- ♦ Have gray, green, or brown lenses (gray is recommended)

Children and teenagers are particularly susceptible to the sun’s damaging rays because they typically spend more time outdoors than adults and the lenses of their eyes are more transparent than those of adults. Thus, this allows more UV radiation to reach the retinas of children and teenagers (the retina is the light sensitive layer at the back of the eyes.) The effects of UV radiation are cumulative, so it’s important to develop good protection habits early in life.

Give yourself the gift of healthy vision with a great pair of sunglasses—your eyes will love you for it.

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*The American Optometric Association, founded in 1898, represents more than 34,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians in more than 7,000 communities across the country. Optometrists examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the visual system, the eye and associated structures as well as diagnose related systemic conditions. The mission of the profession of optometry is to fulfill the vision and eye care needs of the public through clinical care, research and education, all of which enhance the quality of life of patients.*

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# Majority of Sports-Related Eye Injuries are Preventable with Protective Eyewear

*Each year, thousands of sports-related eye injuries occur in the United States. The arrival of spring brings more outdoor sports and with them, the increased danger of eye injuries. The American Optometric Association (AOA) urges even casual athletes to protect their sight-and that of teammates-by keeping street eyewear off the playing field and wearing proper protective eyewear instead. Conventional frames and lenses do not meet the minimum requirements for impact resistance in most sports, which can turn a small collision into a sight-threatening injury.*

**ST. LOUIS, MO, April 1, 2008** ~ Each year, thousands of sports-related eye injuries occur in the United States. The arrival of spring brings more outdoor sports and with them, the increased danger of eye injuries. The American Optometric Association (AOA) urges even casual athletes to protect their sight-and that of teammates-by keeping street eyewear off the playing field and wearing proper protective eyewear instead. Conventional frames and lenses do not meet the minimum requirements for impact resistance in most sports, which can turn a small collision into a sight-threatening injury, the AOA cautions. Sports-protective eyewear is tested to meet rigid standards and some have been independently verified and received the AOA Seal of Acceptance <http://www.aoa.org/x7226.xml> .

"Eye protection should be of major concern to all athletes, especially in certain high-risk sports," said Dr. Paul Berman, AOA optometrist and Sports Vision Specialist. "Thousands of children and adults unnecessarily suffer sports-related eye injuries each year. Every thirteen minutes an emergency room in the United States treats a sports related eye injury' and nearly all could be prevented by using the proper protective eyewear. And, if you participate in sports, get an eye exam. It can detect whether you have vision problems, like nearsightedness, farsightedness or astigmatism, which could diminish your performance and lead to physical injuries during sports."

Some cautionary sports vision statistics include:

- Approximately 600,000 documented sports-related injuries are reported each year in the United States. (Tri-Service Vision Conservation and Readiness Program, Eyes (Ears) and Workers Compensation)
- More than 42,000 sports-related eye injuries require emergency room attention. (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission)
- An estimated 13,500 cases result in permanent loss of sight. (Protective Eyewear Certification Council)

- Approximately 72 percent of sports-related eye injuries occur in people younger than 25 years and approximately 43 percent occur in children younger than 15 years. (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission)

Sports vision goes beyond choosing the correct protective eyewear that protects and provides clear vision. Just like speed and strength, vision is an important component of how well you play your sport, the AOA says. And there is much more to vision than just seeing clearly. Your vision is composed of many interrelated skills. And, just as exercise and practice can increase your speed and strength, they also can improve your visual fitness and accuracy.

Because all sports have different visual demands, an optometrist with expertise in sports vision can assess your unique visual system and recommend the proper eyeglasses or contact lenses, or design a vision-therapy program to maximize your visual skills for a specific sport.

Sports with a moderate to high risk of eye injury include basketball, baseball, softball, cricket, lacrosse, field hockey, ice hockey, squash, racquetball, fencing, boxing, full-contact martial arts, air rifle, tennis, badminton, soccer, volleyball, water polo, football, fishing, golf and wrestling”.

The most common sports vision concerns include:

1. **Protection:** Athletes' eyes need certified sports protective eyewear that will protect against injury with lenses that protect from ultra-violet light.
2. **Correction:** Spectacle wearers require sports protective eyewear that also will correct their vision, while contact-lens wearers may need a different lens than their everyday one. For example, skiers spend their time in cold, dry conditions and need a contact lens that will provide more moisture.
3. **Vision enhancement:** Athletes often need help enhancing their binocularity or depth perception.

"Doctors of optometry work with their patients to provide unique, advantaged eyewear solutions in order to protect vision and improve performance in athletics," said Dr. Berman. "I encourage you to visit your local optometrist to discuss options for vision protection, correction, and enhancement."

For additional information regarding sports vision, please visit

<http://www.aoa.org/sports-vision.xml> <<http://www.aoa.org/sports-vision.xml>> .

'US Consumer Product Safety Commission, Sports and Recreational Eye Injuries. Washington, D.C.: US Consumer Product Safety Commission; 2000)

"Vinger PF. A practical guide for sports eye protection. Phys Sports Med. 2000; 28(6)

## **About the American Optometric Association (AOA):**

*The American Optometric Association represents more than 34,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. Optometrists serve patients in nearly 6,500 communities across the country, and in 3,500 of those communities are the only eye doctors.*

*American Optometric Association doctors of optometry are highly qualified, trained doctors on the frontline of eye and vision care who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. In addition to providing eye and vision care, optometrists play a major role in a patient's overall health and well-being by detecting systemic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Doctors of optometry have the skills and training to provide more than two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States.*

*Prior to optometry school, optometrists undergo three to four years of undergraduate study that typically culminates in a Bachelor of Science degree in a field such as biology or chemistry. Optometry school consists of four years of post-graduate, doctoral study concentrating on both the eye and systemic health. In addition to their formal training, doctors of optometry must undergo annual continuing education to stay current on the latest standards of care. For more information, visit [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org)*

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