

EYE-Q

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Safety Eye Wear is Important to Eye Health

Since September is designated as eye health and safety month and with school sports well underway this is a perfect time to talk about eye protection in sports. Eye injuries can be very serious and can sometimes cause loss of vision or even blindness. Eye injuries are also almost always preventable if you protect your eyes with proper eyewear. It's important that you wear eye protection any time you're in a situation where dust, flying objects, heat, intense light, or chemicals could get into your eye. There are different types of eyewear for different activities.

The 3 main types of safety eyewear are safety glasses, goggles and face shields.

- **Safety glasses.** Safety glasses look a lot like regular glasses but are made from a special polycarbonate material. This is an extremely impact-resistant material. For the best protection, special frames that are impact resistant are also recommended. Safety glasses should be used when you want protection from impact of flying debris. These are often used by athletes and craftsman. If you have a vision problem, you can have corrective lenses made from this durable material.
- **Goggles.** Safety goggles offer an extra level of protection by protecting the sides of your eyes. The goggles fit snugly around your eyes with a strap. Safety goggles are made of firm plastic or a flexible rubber. Goggles are best for when you need protection against dust, chemicals, and flying debris. If you have a vision problem, you can wear your eyeglasses or contact lenses underneath some types of goggles. You can also have goggles specially made with your correction. These are often worn for sports such as racquetball, basketball, and skiing. They are also commonly used for science experiments, construction, and woodworking.
- **Face shields.** Face shields cover your entire face and protect against heat and impact. Some hard hats and helmets have a face shield attached to them. If you wear eyeglasses or contact lenses, you can wear them beneath the face shield. Face shields should not replace safety glasses or goggles for certain types of activities. They are often worn over glasses or goggles. Face shields, and goggles as well, are sometimes filtered and shaded to protect against heat or glare. This is common protection for people using lasers or welders. The tinted shields often worn by football players help to protect an eye that may have previously been injured or is prone to injury.

If your job or athletic pursuit carries a known risk of eye injury, you should be wearing safety eyewear. In the workplace, federal law requires your employer to provide you with protective eyewear. Look for eyewear with "Z87" marked somewhere on the lens or frame. This shows it has been approved by the American National Standards Institute. This is the group that sets the criteria for safety glasses and goggles.

When you do any work around the house that requires hammering, power tools, chemicals, or splatter of any kind, safety eyewear should be worn. A small metal chip flying off a nail or hammer can reach high speeds and penetrate the unprotected eye before you can react to it. Also, certain recreational activities are high risk for eye injury. Playing paintball, racquetball, lacrosse, hockey, and fast-pitch softball are some examples of activities in which severe eye injuries can occur. You should also wear eye protection when shooting firearms or using explosives of any kind.

Many eye injuries occur during a break when people take off their eyewear. If you are still in a high-risk area (such as a construction site or shooting range), you should keep your protective eyewear on until you have left the area completely.

If you have questions about your eye health e-mail Dr. Barowsky at doctom@tdkj.com and we'll try to answer your questions here at Eye-Q.