



The Coalition to Prevent Sports Eye Injuries

Fact Sheet



Mission

The Coalition To Prevent Sports Eye Injuries was created to substantially reduce the number of avoidable eye injuries that occur in today's sports and recreational environment. This mission will be achieved through the implementation of proactive programs targeting the education of eye care professionals, organized sports organizations, government agencies, parents and participants with regards to both the risks of sport-related eye injury as well as effective measures of prevention.

Fast Facts

- More than 600,000 eye injuries related to sports and recreation occur each year¹. 42,000 of these injuries are of a severity that requires Emergency Room attention.²
- More than 90% of all eye injuries can be prevented with the use of appropriate protective eyewear.³
- Sports participants using "street wear" (corrective eyewear or sunwear that does not conform to ASTM standard F803) are at a far more severe risk of eye injury than participants using no eye protection at all.⁴
- The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Ophthalmology and American Optometric Association all strongly recommend protective eyewear for all participants in sports in which there is a risk of eye injury.⁵
- The following sports are considered a high-to-moderate risk of eye injury: Basketball, Baseball, Softball, Lacrosse, Hockey, Tennis, Soccer, Volleyball, Water Polo, Football, Air Rifle, BB Gun, Paintball, Boxing, Martial Arts, Cricket, Squash, Racquetball, Fencing, Badminton, Fishing and Golf.⁶
- One-in-eighteen college athletes will sustain an eye injury each season. The odds increase to one-in-ten for basketball players.⁷
- One-in-eight victims of severe eye injury, and one-in-twenty victims of less-severe eye injury, initiate legal proceedings against parties assumed to be responsible.⁸
- A market sampling in Michigan⁹ determined that:
 - 97% of high schools do not have a Sports Vision Program
 - 98% of high school coaches would be interested in a Sports Vision Program
 - 99% of high schools have never been approached regarding the establishment of a Sports Vision Program.
- According to the 2002 National Health Interview Survey, 84.6% of children do not utilize protective eyewear in situations that represent a risk of eye injury.
- Increasing the use of protective eyewear in sports is a goal of the National Institute of Health's "Healthy People 2010" initiative.¹⁰





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Objectives

Objective I: Eliminate the use of “street wear” in sports that represent a risk of eye injury

When participating in risk-prone sports and recreational activities, nothing is more dangerous to the eye than the use of “street” corrective eyewear or sunwear. “Street wear” increases the severity of impact-related eye injury due to the fact that the frame and/or lens can break into sharp pieces capable of penetrating the eye, putting the participant at a higher risk of blindness. **“Street wear” simply does not belong on the court or playing field.**

“We are required to warn customers that they can be injured by the product that helps them to see.”

– Alex Yohn, F.N.A.O.¹¹

The Coalition To Prevent Sports Eye Injuries will assume a leadership role in the effort to eradicate the use of “street wear” in sports and recreational activities that represent a risk of eye injury. This objective will be pursued via the following approach:

- Reinforcement of the eyecare professional's “duty to inform” regarding the risks of eye injury associated with the use of “street wear” while participating in sport and recreational activities that represent a risk of eye injury. In addition to the ongoing recruitment of dedicated Coalition members, this effort includes professional outreach programs, public speaking engagements, training seminars and the provision of educational and promotional materials within the eyecare community.
- Lobbying efforts to enact legislation preventing the use of “street wear” in organized sports programs.
- Initiation of partnership programs with national health and sports organizations to disseminate information regarding the risk of severe eye injury related to the use of “street wear” on the court and playing field.

Objective II: Extension of protective sports eyewear to the non-ophthalmic population

Eye care professionals are the primary source of both information regarding the risk of sports-related eye injuries as well as protective eyewear product. However, less than 20% of children and teenagers participating in sports and recreational activities require corrective eyewear and therefore typically lack routine interaction with eye care professionals. As a result, the vast majority of sports participants and their parents are not exposed to information regarding the risk of sports-related eye injury and/or to available protective eyewear product. The Coalition To Prevent Sports Eye Injuries is dedicated to extending the reach of risk information and effective product to the population of sports participants that do not require vision correction. This objective will be pursued based on the following approach:

- Cooperation with national health organizations to explore channels of communication outside of the eye care community as a means to educate athletic program directors, coaches, parents and participants regarding the risk of eye injury in relevant sport and recreational activities.

“Anyone who works in ophthalmology sees cases of sports-related eye injuries. It’s frustrating because they’re almost all preventable.”

– David Hunter, M.D.¹²

- Collaboration with national sports organizations to explore communications initiatives and potential distribution structures that leverage the direct “role model” contact of coaches and athletic directors as a means to disseminate risk information and provide parents/participants with a choice to protect their eyes when participating in risk-prone sports and recreational activities.
- Collaboration with protective eyewear suppliers to support new methods of product development and distribution that can accommodate the specific requirements of the non-ophthalmic organized sports population.
- Lobbying efforts to enact legislation mandating the use of protective eyewear when participating in sports that represent a risk of eye injury.



The Coalition to Prevent Sports Eye Injuries

Team



Chairman: Paul Berman, OD, FAAO

- Former Chairman, AOA Sports Vision Program
- Founder and Senior Global Clinical Director of Special Olympics Lions Clubs International **Opening Eyes** Program
- 2004 International Optometrist of the Year
- 2000 Sports Vision Optometrist of the Year
- 1998 New Jersey Optometrist of the Year

Board of Directors

Stuart Dankner, MD: Dr. Dankner is the Chairman of the *Eye Safety Committee* of the *Maryland Society for Sight*. He sits on the Board of the *American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus*, is a clinical professor at the *University of Maryland Hospital* and an assistant professor of ophthalmology at the *Johns Hopkins School of Medicine*.

Phil Irion, OD: Dr. Irion has served as Chairman of the *US Olympics Visual Performance and Safety Committee*, the *AOA Sports Vision Program* and the *Board of Examiners for Optometry* and as President of the *Michigan Optometric Association*. He has been voted *Sports Optometrist of the Year (AOA, 1996)* as well as *Optometrist of the Year (Michigan Optometric Association, 2004)*

Monica Monica, MD: Dr. Monica is the former President of the *Louisiana Ophthalmology Association*, former member of the *AAO Sports and Eye Safety Committee*, and is an active spokesperson for the *American Academy of Ophthalmology*.

Rick Palumbo, LDO, ABOC: Mr. Palumbo is a licensed optician and the Program Director of the *Ophthalmic Dispensing Department* at the *Essex County Community College* in New Jersey.

Katheryn Schramm, FNAO: Ms. Schramm, author of *Dispensing Pediatric Eyewear*, is the President and CEO of *A Child's View, Inc.* She is a national spokesperson and trainer for the VCA and sits on the advisory board of *EyeCare Business Magazine*.

Membership:

Launched in August 2005, the Coalition To Prevent Eye Injuries currently has a membership of over six hundred practicing ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians in the US eyecare community.

Contact:

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Sources

¹ Tri-Service Vision Conservation and Readiness Program, *Eyes (Ears) and Workers Compensation*.

² US Consumer Product Safety Commission, *Sports and Recreational Eye Injuries*. Washington, DC: US Consumer Product Safety Commission; 2000

³ Prevent Blindness America

⁴ National Eye Institute

⁵ AAP/AOA Policy Statement 2004 and 2003 House of Delegates, *Journal of American Optometric Association*, Sept. 2003

⁶⁻⁸ Vinger PF. A practical guide for sports eye protection. *Phys Sports Med*. 2000;28(6)

⁹ Michigan Optometric Association

¹⁰ Healthy People 2010

¹¹ Yohn, A., *Make the Right Call*, *Eyecare Business*, June 2004

¹² David Hunter, M.D., Asst. Professor of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine