

# BRIDGES

Section B

PONTE VEDRA RECORDER

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## TO YOUR HEALTH Sports-related eye injuries can be prevented



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Every year thousands of people damage or lose their vision from eye injuries that occur during recreational activities — one third of them children under the age of 16. With some precautions, 90 percent of these sports-related injuries could have been prevented.

Any sport that involves a stick or racket, a ball or other projectile, or body contact presents a risk of serious eye injury. Existing classification systems rank sports with their risk for eye injuries - basketball, baseball, and hockey are high risk; horse racing, polo and handball have a moderate risk; and track and field, fishing and golf have a low risk for eye injury.

In addition to people who have had structurally weakening surgeries to the eye, a new population of at-risk individuals are those who have had LASIK surgery. With millions of people all over the world undergoing LASIK, propose a serious look into this category of “normal eyes.” These people are potentially prone to flap displacement during contact or projectile sports. I recommend that these individuals safeguard their sight with added precautions.

Physicians have an obligation to warn players of potential risk and to recommend appropriate eye protection. Sports eye protection should be designed specifically for the activity or sport. Eye protection that

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bears the seal of sanctioned organizations should be mandated for high-risk sports. The team physician should insist that players of sports with an eye hazard wear certified protectors. Non-team physicians should include a sports history as part of the routine examination of all patients and recommend protective eyewear appropriate for the patient's activity.

The basic steps in choosing protective gear for an eye-safety program include knowing the athlete's vision and eye history, using only eye protectors that have been certified to national performance standards and having professionals assist the athlete in selecting a fitting protective eyewear.

### **Here are some additional recommendations:**

- Proper fit in children is essential because some children have narrow facial features.
- Protectors with clear lenses (nonprescription or prescription) should contain polycarbonate, the strongest lens material available.
- For sports requiring a face mask or helmet, the helmet must fit properly and have a properly fastened chin strap for optimal protection.
- Athletes who wear contact lenses must also wear appropriate eye protection. Regular spectacle frames are not adequate and can shatter on impact.
- Replace sports eye protectors that are damaged or yellowed with age because they may have become weakened.
- Functionally one-eyed athletes and those who have had an eye injury or surgery can participate in almost all sports if they use appropriate eye protection, with the exceptions of boxing, for which eye protection isn't practical, and full-contact martial arts, for which protection is not allowed.
- Select games and toys appropriate for children and responsibility level

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