
Protective Eyewear for Children with Impaired Vision

Children who have impaired vision in one or both eyes when wearing their eyeglasses must take special precautions to minimize the risk of eye injury to the better eye. A child who has less than 20/40 vision in one or both eyes while wearing eyeglasses needs to be extra careful because a serious injury to the better eye could potentially leave the child with only the vision in the weaker eye. The child may then be handicapped because 20/40 vision is required for some things including obtaining an unrestricted driver's license in many states.

Children with impaired vision should wear protective eyewear for all activities that have a risk of eye injury. This includes sports, physical education class, and certain hobbies that could result in an eye injury. This is not an insignificant problem; in the year 2000 there were more than 42,000 sports and recreation-related eye injuries that required medical treatment.

Protective eyewear is available that meets the standards of the ASTM (American Society for Testing of Materials). Protective eyewear frames must meet the proper ASTM standard and the lenses must be made of shatterproof, polycarbonate plastic. The lenses can be made with the child's eyeglass prescription. Opticians can show you examples of ASTM-approved eyewear. Remember: for sports with a risk of eye injury, regular eyeglasses are not protective!!

The following national recommendations have been adopted by the Monroe County Medical Society:

- 1) Children with less than 20/40 vision in either eye must wear ASTM-approved protective eyewear for all sports with a risk of eye injury - both for practice and competitive events.
- 2) Children with less than 20/40 vision in either eye should not participate in boxing, wrestling, or full-contact martial arts because of a lack of protective eyewear designed for these sports.
- 3) In addition, children with less than 20/40 vision in either eye should wear eyeglasses with shatterproof, polycarbonate lenses for eye protection at all times.