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Leading Cause of Eye Injuries in School-Aged Children are Sports-related

***- Prevent Blindness America Declares September as Sports Eye Injury
Awareness Month to Help Protect Vision -***

CHICAGO (Aug. 14, 2012) – Every 13 minutes, an emergency room in the United States treats someone for a sports-related eye injury. According to the [National Eye Institute](#), eye injuries are the leading cause of blindness in children in America, and most injuries occurring in school-aged children are sports-related. The results of an eye injury can range from temporary to permanent vision loss.

The NEI also states that baseball is the sport responsible for the greatest number of eye injuries in children aged 14 and younger. While basketball is the sport that records the highest number of eye injuries for those ages 15- 24.

Fortunately, most eye injuries can be prevented through wearing the proper eye protection. Prevent Blindness America has dedicated September as Sports Eye Safety Awareness Month to educate the public on the necessary steps to help keep eyes healthy for life. The national non-profit group is also teaming up once again with The Coalition to Prevent Sports Eye Injuries and Liberty Sport, to provide consumers and eye care professionals with free information and materials through the “September is Sports Eye Injury Prevention Awareness Month” campaign.

“More than half of all children participate in organized sports. But, most youth sports leagues do not require the use of proper eye protection,” said Paul Berman, O.D., F.A.A.O and Chairman for The Coalition to Prevent Sports Eye Injuries. “Through this partnership, it is our goal to educate parents and coaches on the importance of requiring kids to use sports eye safetywear during practice and during the game.”

Polycarbonate lenses must be used with protectors that meet or exceed the requirements of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). Each sport has a specific ASTM code. Polycarbonate eyewear is 10 times more impact resistant than other plastics.

Eye injuries can include painful corneal abrasions, blunt trauma and penetrating injuries, inflamed iris, fracture of the eye socket, swollen or detached retinas, traumatic cataract and blood spilling into the eye's anterior chamber. All athletes who have poor vision or blindness in one eye should take particular care to protect their remaining vision.

“Our healthy eyesight is something that we can sometimes take for granted. But, in an instant, a severe eye injury can have life changing results,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “By consistently wearing the right eye protection while playing sports, we can help to eliminate vision loss and permanent blindness in children and adults!”

Prevent Blindness America provides the following steps to avoid sports eye injuries:

- Never wear regular eyeglasses while playing sports as they may shatter upon impact. Only wear prescription protective sports eyewear fitted by an eye care professional.
- Sports eye protectors should be padded or cushioned along the brow and bridge of the nose. Padding will prevent them from cutting the skin.
- Athletes who have monocular vision, diminished vision in one eye, should always wear sports eye protectors recommended by an eye doctor.
- All sports eye protection should have 100 percent Ultraviolet (UV) protection.

For more information on sports eye injury prevention and information on sport-specific eye protection recommendations, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020, or visit preventblindness.org/sports-eye-safety. Online users can join the Prevent Blindness America Vision Web Forum at preventblindness.org/sportsforum to discuss sports-related eye health and safety topics with other concerned adults.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates and regional offices, Prevent Blindness America is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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