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# PREVENTION OF HEAD, MOUTH, AND EYE INJURIES IN SPORTS

Last Reviewed Nov. 2016

## Links of Interest

For additional information on sports safety for youth:

[http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/sport\\_safety.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/sport_safety.html) Five Ways to Avoid Sports Injuries

<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;113/3/619> American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement: Protective Eyewear for Young Athletes

[www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org) National Safety Council

## Statement from the YMCA of the USA Health, Risk, and Safety Advisory Committee (HRSAC)

Protective safety equipment has been developed and recommended for many different sports to help prevent and reduce the severity of injuries. Health professionals and health-related sports organizations often recommend the use of safety equipment in response to research identifying a high risk of injury in a particular sport.

### HELMETS

Sports and certain types of recreation account for many traumatic brain injuries, including concussions. Wearing a helmet is important when engaging in such activities. Helmets are designed and have been proven to prevent or reduce the severity of brain injuries and impact injuries to the head.

The YMCA of the USA Health, Risk, and Safety Advisory Committee strongly recommends that participants wear helmets or head guards when playing sports that have a high risk of head injury, including baseball, bicycling, equestrian sports, football, hockey, in-line skating, lacrosse, rugby, skateboarding, skiing, softball, and wrestling. There is insufficient research at this time to demonstrate that use of head guards reduces concussions, although they may prevent scalp abrasions and lacerations. Further, since a universal helmet has not yet been developed, it is strongly suggested that participants wear a helmet that has been specifically designed for the sport in which they are engaged.

All helmets used for sports and other activities that have a risk of head injury should meet the industry standards set by the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE), the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), or a similar organization.

## **PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR**

Sports and recreational activities, particularly baseball, basketball, lacrosse, and racquet sports, cause many eye injuries each year. Most of these injuries could be prevented through the use of protective eyewear. The YMCA of the USA Health, Risk, and Safety Advisory Committee strongly recommends that participants in YMCA sports and activities that involve risk of eye injury use protective eyewear approved by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) for the specific activity in which they are engaging. Specifically, the use of a closed polycarbonate eye guard is recommended. Open eye guards often fail to protect the eyes from injury and may actually increase the potential for injury. During YMCA-sponsored programs or events, it is recommended that the local and host YMCAs require the use of appropriate eye protection.

## **MOUTH GUARDS**

According to the American Dental Association (ADA), the use of face guards and mouth guards prevents about 200,000 injuries each year in organized high school and college football alone. Though few other scholastic sports require mouth guard use, the ADA advocates that people wear mouth guards while playing any sport that poses a risk to the head, face, or mouth as a result of

- head-to-head contact,
- hazardous falls,
- clenching of teeth, or
- flying pieces of equipment.

The YMCA of the USA Health, Risk, and Safety Advisory Committee supports the ADA recommendation and strongly recommends that YMCAs encourage athletes to wear mouth guards when participating in sports involving any of the above risk factors.

