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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Sports Eye Protection Should Be Part of Team Uniform**

### ***- Eyeguards Should be Considered an Essential Part of Any Sports Equipment-***

**CHICAGO (Aug. 30, 2010)** – According to the National Eye Institute (NEI), eye injuries are the leading cause of blindness in school-aged children. And, most of those injuries are sports-related. In fact, every 13 minutes, an emergency room in the United States treats a sports-related eye injury, many of them children.

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. Injuries can range from temporary to permanent vision loss.

Fortunately, 90 percent of all eye injuries can be prevented through proper eye protection. Prevent Blindness America has declared September as Sports Eye Health and Safety Awareness Month to encourage parents and children to learn the easy steps they can take to protect vision for a lifetime.

Prevent Blindness America provides information on sports eye health and safety for children through its new Star Pupils program, a national initiative designed to give parents the tools and information they need to protect their child's eyes from needless injury or even blindness. Parents may simply visit [StarPupils.org](http://StarPupils.org) to find a listing of recommended eye protection for various sports including baseball, basketball, football, soccer and hockey. Additionally, guidelines are provided to help parents choose a pair of eyeguards that is right for their child.

Online users can also join the Prevent Blindness America Vision Web Forum at [preventblindness.org/sportsforum](http://preventblindness.org/sportsforum) to discuss sports-related eye health and safety topics with other concerned adults. Prevent Blindness America recently joined efforts with The Coalition to Prevent Sports Eye Injuries and Liberty Sport, Inc., in an awareness campaign entitled "September is Sports Eye Injury Prevention Awareness Month". The campaign was designed to provide eye care professionals, specifically those who are Sports Eye Injury Prevention Centers, with in-store educational materials to make eye safety a priority for kids when playing sports.

“With the new school year starting for many children and parents purchasing sports uniforms and equipment for their child, we urge everyone to add eye protection to the shopping list,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “Today, there is a variety of styles that are easy to wear and do not impede performance. We want children to get in the habit early on to make eye protection part of the game plan.”

All eye protection lenses should be made of polycarbonate and have an American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) label, indicating they meet or exceed the standards of the ASTM F803 for the specific sport. And, polycarbonate eyewear is 10 times more impact resistant than other plastics, according to the National Eye Institute.

Prevent Blindness America recommends the following:

- If your child wears prescription glasses, ask your eye doctor to fit your child for prescription eyeguards.
- If your child is a monocular athlete (a person with only one eye that sees well), ask your eye doctor what sports your child can safely participate in. Monocular athletes should always wear sports eyeguards.
- Buy eyeguards at sports specialty stores or optical stores. At the sports store, ask for a sales representative who's familiar with eye protectors for assistance.
- Some eyeguards are available with anti-fog coating. Others have side vents for additional ventilation. Have your child try on different types to determine which is most comfortable.
- Check the packaging to see if the eye protector your child selects has been tested for sports use.
- Sports eyeguards should be padded or cushioned along the brow and bridge of the nose. Padding will prevent the eyeguards from cutting your child's skin.
- Have your child try on the eye protector to determine if it's the right size.

For more information on sports eye health and safety for children, call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020, visit [starpupils.org](http://starpupils.org) or [facebook.com/StarPupils](https://facebook.com/StarPupils).

### **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, divisions and chapters, 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](http://preventblindness.org) or [facebook.com/preventblindness](https://facebook.com/preventblindness).

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