



PRESS RELEASE

To: News Editors & Directors

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From Swimming to Hockey, Protective Athletic Eyewear can Prevent 36,000 Eye Injuries

Over 40,000 athletes annually receive eye injuries, 90% of which are preventable

(Honolulu, Hawaii), March 30, 2007- Each year eye injuries are the leading cause of vision impairment in children and while many sports accidents can lead to a simple black eye, other young athletes are not as lucky and can suffer more severe injuries that could lead to permanent loss of vision. 40,000 annual sports related eye injuries and the fact that 90% of these injuries were preventable has caused the American Academy of Ophthalmology to name April Sports Eye Safety Month.

Among the sports that cause the most eye injuries are basketball and baseball. All sports are categorized into three groups, low risk, high risk and very high risk. Low risk sports such as cycling or gymnastics do not include bodily contact or the use of a ball, puck, stick or racquet. High risk sports use one the four; ball, puck, stick or racquet and usually involve some sort of physical contact as in basketball, football or tennis for example. Very high risk sports like boxing or wrestling feature significant body contact and do not use eye protection.

“Despite the level of risk, low, high or very high, all sports pose a threat to ocular health,” said Dr. Christopher Tortora, M.D., Medical Director at Wahiawa’s Hawaiian Eye Center. “Many of the injuries an athlete might suffer are placed into three groups based on the type of injury, blunt trauma, penetrating injury or sunlight radiation injury.”

A blunt trauma injury may be the most common injury as many sports carry the likelihood of being hit in the face either by an object used in the game or another participant.

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Penetrating injuries are far less common, but occur when something enters the eye and cuts it. An example of a penetrating injury could be a child who wears and breaks their everyday glasses while playing a sport and a piece of the lens or frame then cuts their eye.

“The final type of injury, radiation injury, is most common in sports that involve either water or snow, where the reflection of the sun's rays make the light most intense and exposure to ultraviolet light is at its peak.

“Each sport requires a unique set of protective eyewear,” Dr. Tortora said. “The best thing parents can do for their children is to speak with their child’s eye doctor to find the correct pair of protective eyewear for their child and their sport. We recommend a 3-mm polycarbonate lens as it is impact resistant and can be made with or without a prescription incorporated.”

Athletes and parents of athletes alike should be aware that contacts and sunglasses can not protect eyes from blunt or penetrating injuries while wearing a faceguard or helmet is also not complete protection from injuries. Helmets can fall off and any time eyes are still exposed leaves them vulnerable to injury.

Dr. Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of The Hawaiian Eye Show, a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision. He and his colleagues at Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventive eye care. To learn more about other eye health issues, please call Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8448 where “*life has never looked better.*”

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