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For more information:
Prevent Blindness
Monica Saenz Guerrero
Phone: (713) 526-2559, Ext. 106
msaenz@preventblindnesstexas.org

New Data From Prevent Blindness Shows Most Sports-related Eye Injuries are From Water and Pool Activities

- Prevent Blindness Texas designates September as Sports Eye Safety Awareness Month to encourage wearing proper eye protection while playing all sports -

Houston, TX (Aug. 25, 2016) – According to recent data from Prevent Blindness, more eye injuries occur from water and pool activities than any other sport. Eye injuries may include everything from eye infections and irritations to burns from chlorine and other chemicals to scratches or trauma from other swimmers. Wearing contact lenses during water activities also increases the risk for Acanthamoeba keratitis, a severe, painful infection of the cornea, which usually causes scarring and, if undiagnosed and untreated, can lead to blindness. In the most severe cases, a corneal transplant may be necessary.

Other sports with the most eye injuries include basketball, use of guns (air, gas, spring and BB), baseball/softball and football. Eye injuries from any sport may include infection, corneal abrasions, fracture of the eye socket, swollen or detached retinas or a traumatic cataract. In the worst cases, some injuries may result in permanent vision loss.

As part of September's Sports Eye Safety Awareness month, Prevent Blindness and Prevent Blindness Texas share these recommendations:

- For those who wear prescription glasses, ask an eye doctor for prescription eyeguards. Monocular athletes (those with only one eye that sees well), should consult an eye doctor about what sports are safe to participate in.
- A sports helmet alone may not protect from eye injury. Additional safety eyewear should be used.
- Eyeguards or sports protective eyewear should be labeled as ASTM F803 approved.
- Don't buy sports eyeguards without lenses. Only "lensed" protectors are recommended for sports use. Make sure the lenses either stay in place or pop

outward in the event of an accident. Lenses that pop in against the eyes can be very dangerous.

- Some frames have built in venting solutions for ultimate performance. Lenses should have an anti-fog solution to prevent fogging of the lenses.
- Check the packaging to see whether the eye protector you select has been tested for sports use. Also check to see that the eye protector is made of polycarbonate material. Polycarbonate eyeguards are the most impact resistant.
- Sports eyeguards should be padded or cushioned along the brow and bridge of the nose. Padding will prevent the eyeguards from cutting your skin.
- Try on the eye protector to determine if it's the right size. Adjust the strap and make sure it's not too tight or too loose. If you purchased your eyeguards at an optical store, an optical representative can help you adjust the eye protector for a comfortable fit.

“Playing sports is an important part of being healthy and active,” said **Debbie Goss, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness** “Whether you are just starting out in a sport or have been playing it for years, everyone should consult an eye care professional to ensure they are doing everything they can to optimize their performance as well as protect their vision for years to come.”

To assist eye care professionals in educating consumers and raising awareness, Prevent Blindness and Liberty Sport offer free materials through the “September is Sports Eye Injury Prevention Awareness Month” program. To request a kit, please contact Angela Gerber, Liberty Sport, at (973) 882-0986 x972 or agerber@libertysport.com.

For more information on sports eye injury prevention or contact lens safety, please call Prevent Blindness Texas at 1-888-98-SIGHT or visit www.preventblindnesstexas.org.

About Prevent Blindness Texas

Founded in 1956, Prevent Blindness is the state’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 Texas touches the lives of thousands of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the Texas public. Through a network of regional offices and volunteers, we are committed to eliminating preventable blindness in Texas. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-888-98-SIGHT or, visit us on the Web at preventblindnesstexas.org or www.facebook.com/preventblindnesstexas or www.twitter.com/pbtexas.

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