Sports-Related Retina Injuries

Participating in sports can have a host of benefits, including enhanced physical and mental health. Along with the positive impact of playing sports, there is a risk of physical injury including those that can affect vision.

Reduce risk through awareness

Injuries to the retina can occur during sports such as soccer, tennis, and basketball when blunt injury or a direct blow to the eye from a sports ball causes the retina to tear or detach. Penetrating injuries, when a finger, elbow, or other object enters the eye, can also damage the retina or other structures in the eye. Sports-related retina injuries can lead to vision loss, and even blindness, without immediate medical attention.

Learning more about how the retina can be damaged during sports, symptoms to watch for and precautions to take can help reduce the risk of sports ball-related retina injuries.

Sports that often lead to sports ball-related eye or retina injuries include:

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Golf
- Paintball
- Pickleball
- Racquet Sports (including Badminton, Racquetball, Squash, Tennis)
- Soccer

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Symptoms of a sports ball-related retina injury may include:

- Blurred vision
- Floaters
- Flashes of light
- Pain in the eye
- Sensitivity to light
- A black spot or curtain in your vision

Early diagnosis and treatment can help to prevent permanent vision loss. If you experience these symptoms, seek treatment from a retina specialist immediately.

Common sports ball-related retina injuries include:

- Retinal detachment
- Retinal dialysis, a type of retinal tear often caused by blunt trauma
- Retinal swelling
- Macular hole
- Retinal or vitreous hemorrhage or bleeding

There are several things you can do to reduce the risk of sports-related retina injuries:

- Wear protective eyewear when playing sports.
- Make sure your eyewear is the right fit and is made from shatterproof material.
- Be aware of your surroundings and if possible leave space between you and other players to decrease the risk of being hit in the eye.
- If you experience eye injury or trauma, see an ophthalmologist or retina specialist immediately, even if you do not have any symptoms.

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