

PROTECT YOUR FACE AND HEAD FROM INJURY

Proper protective gear can prevent most face and head injuries, including bruises, cuts, broken bones, and damaged teeth. Athletes should always wear it in practice and competition to lower injury risk, even when it is optional.

Properly fitted equipment is essential for protection. Ask your athletic trainer to check that your gear fits correctly.

HELMETS

Required for: Football, ice hockey, baseball, softball, men's lacrosse

Purpose: Prevent skull fractures (not concussion)

Consider: Look for a National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment sticker and have helmets recertified regularly.

FACE MASKS

Required for: Ice hockey, men's lacrosse, football, softball (depending on the state)

Purpose: Shield the eyes and jaw in hockey and lacrosse, and the facial bones in football.

Consider: Facemask styles vary by position and protection needs. For example, a football lineman's cage is more closed than a quarterback's or receiver's.

SAFETY GOGGLES

Required for: Field hockey and girls' lacrosse (depending on the state); small-ball sports, including racquetball and tennis

Suggested for: Basketball, football, swimming

Purpose: Shield the eyes and the bones around them.

Consider: Even when goggles are optional, consider them, especially if you've had an eye injury. Swim goggles can shield eyes from chemicals and other irritants and improve underwater vision.

EAR PROTECTION

Required for: Wrestling, water polo

Purpose: Prevent scalp and ear injuries.

Consider: Wear protective gear at practice even when optional to prevent injuries such as swimmer's ear, cauliflower ear, and broken blood vessels.

MOUTH GUARDS

Required for: Field hockey, football, ice hockey, lacrosse, wrestling (with braces or an orthodontic device)

Purpose: Prevent injuries to teeth and the mouth.

Consider: Mouthguards offer a simple, inexpensive way to prevent serious injuries, including fractures of teeth or roots and displaced teeth.

THROAT GUARDS

Required for: Hockey and lacrosse goalies; softball and baseball catchers

Purpose: Protect against potentially serious injuries, such as bruises, cuts, and fractures.

Consider: Among the available throat guards, choose the most comfortable option that provides the best protection for your position.

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