

Astronauts Wear it, Why not You?

Modern plastics work for space shuttle windshields and eyewear

What's the "space age" plastic that's used in everything from astronaut helmet shields to children's glasses? It's called polycarbonate. It's important stuff, and has probably saved many an eye from serious injury.

VSP optometrist Jennifer Stone, O.D. of Greenville, TX, knows all about it, and what can happen when it's not used. You know the searing pain a wayward eyelash in your eye can cause, right? Imagine how a metal shaving feels. That's the most common eye injury Dr. Stone sees since many of her patients are industrial welders.

Another Greenville doctor, Herbert Williams, O.D., also treats eye injuries. Often his patients were just working in their yard or workshop over a weekend when a random bit of something lodged in their eye. Sometimes the results are mere irritation; other times, vision loss can be the result.

So the question is, when was the last time you wore the right kind of eyewear for the task at hand?

It's a safety precaution few take, but many learn about only after it's too late. Safety glasses are easy to order through your VSP doctor. Your employer may even cover some of the cost.

The Basics: Safety Glasses 101

You can find safety glasses made of industrial strength glass and impact resistant plastic. But nothing beats polycarbonate. It's the safest and most impact-resistant lens material. And yes, it's been used for astronaut helmet shields and space shuttle window shields. It's that strong.

You also can find frames of high-impact plastic or polycarbonate. Protective (and fashionable) designs are available in goggles, wraps and shields. If you don't wear prescription lenses, you can find protective eyewear at your VSP doctor's office or at a sporting goods store.



Eyes on the Job

Do you have a physical job where you rely on your eyes to do a task? Even though you know what you're doing, the chemical or machine you're working with might not. Protect your eyes no matter what, and wear safety glasses.

Eyes About the House

We can all be a bit careless when it comes to safety and household chores. But if you're cutting wood, mowing the lawn or doing something fun like building a model plane, an unexpected flying object or chemical could hurt your eyes. Safety glasses can prevent that.

Eyes on the Field

In sports, many people just plain forget about safety eyewear. "Don't," says Dr. Stone. "Basketball has a high rate of eye injury." Dr. Williams adds that any racquet sport or one involving "flying objects" also needs special eye-protecting equipment.

While we might quickly use kneepads or a helmet, we can often put the safety of our eyes at a lower priority. Our eyes are our windows to wellness but they can also be a door to injury.

A small and simple precaution like the right pair of safety glasses can do the trick. Talk to your VSP doctor to find out more.