

Major risk of eye injuries from racket sports, research ophthalmologists say

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Several eye clinics around Sweden are seeing a rise in eye damage related to the racket sport padel. In an article in the Journal of the Swedish Medical Association (Läkartidningen), eye researchers

affiliated with the University of Gothenburg state that padel is a potential high-risk sport for eye injuries, and that wearing protective goggles is a good idea.

Ball sports are often associated with an increased risk of [eye injuries](#), and the risk seems to be even greater with padel, a sport that is now highly popular in Sweden (and should not be confused with the North American "paddle tennis").

"The ball has a weight of about 50 grams, and a size corresponding to the opening of the eye socket. The ball speed is high, and for a smash shot can be up to 130 kilometers an hour. The bouncing properties of the ball also make recoil assessments quite difficult, which probably increases the risk of the eyes getting damaged," says Gunnar Jakobsson, ophthalmologist at the University of Gothenburg and chief physician at the eye clinic (Department of Ophthalmology) at Sahlgrenska University Hospital.

Serious injuries are rare

Most eye injuries that occur in padel, such as minor hemorrhages inside the eye that require no surgery, are relatively mild. But there have also been reports of occasional serious cases in which padel players suffer lasting visual impairment. In the event of severe [injury](#), there is even a risk of blindness. In the article in the Journal of the Swedish Medical Association (Läkartidningen), Jakobsson and his colleague Catharina Thörnland describe three cases of people incurring eye damage while playing padel. Although their injuries were moderate, they all needed surgical treatment to get better.

Protecting the eyes

Since padel is a potentially high-risk sport where eye injuries are concerned, it is a good idea to wear goggles while playing. Several scientific studies show that wearing goggles, or some other means of eye protection such as a safety visor or face shield, is the most effective way to avoid eye injuries in risky sports. If these protective devices are used correctly, the risk of eye damage is reduced by up to 90 percent.

Jakobsson draws a parallel to floorball, another modern sport characterized by a rapid rise in popularity—for floorball, that occurred in the 1990s.

"For a while, floorball became the sport that caused the most eye injuries. Thanks to the introduction of mandatory goggles for children and at junior level, and strong recommendations for senior players, [eye damage](#) among floorball players has declined."

More information: Article (in Swedish): Ögonskador vid padelspel ökar – önskvärt med skyddsglasögon ("Eye injuries from playing padel on the increase: Wearing goggles desirable"); [Läkartidningen. 2021;118:21001.](#)

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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