

Preventing Eye Injuries

Any activity where something is flying at the eye puts the eye at risk for an injury. Over one million people suffer eye injuries each year in the U.S. Almost 50% of these accidents occur at home and over 90% of them could have been prevented.

Minor injuries to the cornea (the clear, protective covering over the front of the eye) can be quite painful. A corneal abrasion is a scratch. Appropriate treatment may include an antibiotic drop or ointment and an eye patch for comfort. Sand or other particles can stick to the cornea. Such foreign bodies may be removed by your doctor. Do not rub the eye.

Regular prescription glasses or contact lenses do not protect the eyes from injury. Some glasses and some types of contact lenses shatter if the eye is hit. People who play sports and wear prescription glasses can have special glasses or prescription goggles made to protect their eyes.

Unfortunately, many people do not think they are at risk for an eye injury until the injury occurs. The majority of eye injuries are easily prevented. Follow safety precautions and use common sense to reduce the risk.

- Wear safety goggles when using powerful chemicals. Goggles should fit properly to prevent chemicals from getting under them, but still allow air to circulate between the eye and the lens.
- Polycarbonate sports goggles are recommended for all participants of high-impact sports or activities where there is a high risk of eye injury.
- Never use fireworks. Attend public firework displays instead of using fireworks at home. Amateur backyard displays are dangerous to the person lighting the fireworks, nearby family and friends, and neighbors.
- Supervise children when they are handling potentially dangerous items, such as pencils, scissors, and penknives. Be aware that even common household items such as paper clips, elastic cords, wire coat hangers, rubber bands, and fishhooks can cause serious eye injury.
- Avoid projectile toys such as darts and bows and arrows. Do not allow children to play with air-powered rifles, pellet guns and BB guns. They are extremely dangerous and have been reclassified as firearms and removed from toy departments.
- Wear eye protection while mowing the lawn or using a weed eater. Stones and debris thrown from moving blades can cause severe eye injuries.
- Always check to make sure any spray nozzle faces away from the face.
- Use grease shields to cover frying pans and protect eyes from splattering liquids.
- Wear opaque eyeglasses or goggles to shield eyes and block UV light in tanning booths.
- Read instructions before using tools, chemicals, ammonia, etc.

- Be sure you read the instructions while jump-starting a car. Attach the negative ground of the dead battery last. This cable should be attached to the engine away from the dead battery terminal. Never attach a cable to the negative terminal of the dead battery.
- Never use a match or lighter to look under the hood of a car.

When an eye injury does occur, have an eye doctor or urgent care doctor examine the eyes as soon as possible. If specialized surgical intervention is required, referral to a surgeon who performs such procedures would be indicated.

