



## Preventing eye injuries

Eye injuries can cause serious vision loss or even blindness. They are among the problems most often treated in hospital emergency rooms. More severe injuries must be treated by an **ophthalmologist** (a medically trained eye doctor and surgeon).

Nearly half of all eye injuries occur around the home, and most of them are preventable. Prevention is the best medicine.

### Precautions

#### At home

Because everyday products can cause serious burns if they touch your eye:

- Point spray nozzles away from you.
- Read instructions before using cleaning fluids, detergents, ammonia, or harsh chemicals. Wash your hands thoroughly after you use them.
- Use grease shields on frying pans.
- Wear special goggles to protect your eyes from fumes and splashes when you use powerful chemicals.
- Use opaque goggles to avoid burns from sunlamps.
- Be especially careful when you use bungee cords; the hooks on the ends of these cords could blind an eye.
- Do not lean over the bottle when you uncork sparkling wine.

## **In the workshop**

Because objects can fly into your eyes unexpectedly:

- Use safety glasses to protect against possible impacts, splashes, or radiation.
- Read instructions before using tools and chemicals, and follow the recommended safety measures.
- Before you begin work, think about protecting your eyes from flying fragments, dust particles, fumes, and splashed chemicals.
- Beware of power tools and other sources of fragments (such as concrete chips when you are driving nails).

## **Around children**

Because many toys and games can be dangerous:

- Select toys and games suitable for your child's age.
- Avoid projectile toys such as darts, pellet guns, arrows and peashooters.
- Supervise children who are playing with possibly dangerous toys or games.
- Teach children how to carefully handle dangerous items such as knives, scissors, and pencils.
- Keep spray cans, powerful fast-acting glues, and harsh chemicals (such as oven cleaners) out of their reach.
- Teach your children not to throw snowballs, rocks, and crabapples.

## **In the garden**

Because garden tools and chemicals are the cause of many outdoor accidents:

- Do not allow children or adults to stand beside or in front of a running lawnmower.
- Pick up rocks and stones; do not run over them with your lawnmower. Stones can fly out of the rotary blades and rebound off curbs or walls.
- Point spray nozzles on pesticides away from you.
- Avoid low-hanging branches.

## **Around the car**

Because sparks and fumes can ignite and explode, and battery acid can cause serious eye damage:

- Put out all cigarettes or matches before opening the hood of the car.
- Use a flashlight, not a match or lighter, to shine light on the battery at night.
- Beware of the fluid when you work on air conditioners.
- Wear protective goggles when you grind metal or strike metal against metal.
- Wear protective goggles whenever you work under your car.

When jump-starting a car:

- Use proper attachments.
- Keep protective goggles next to your jumper cables, and wear them.
- Make sure the cars are not touching.
- Be sure the jumper cable clamps do not touch.
- Never lean over the battery when attaching cables.

## **For sports**

- Wear protective eyewear when playing sports that use a ball or puck.
- Wear a helmet and faceguard in ice hockey, field hockey, lacrosse and street hockey.
- When playing war games, wear goggles at all times.

## **Around fireworks**

- Treat exploding fireworks with great care.
- Set rockets firmly in the ground before you light them. Most eye injuries happen when rockets are set in bottles or aren't firmly placed.
- Light fireworks with a long taper.
- Never allow children to light fireworks.
- Do not stand close to someone lighting fireworks.
- Never toss fireworks around carelessly or as a joke.

## Treatment

Get medical help immediately from an emergency room, your family doctor, or your ophthalmologist. Eyes can heal, but the process may leave scars or other defects that can cause permanent vision problems.

### **A speck in your eye**

Never rub your eye. Lift your upper lid over the lower one and let your lashes get the speck out. Blinking a few times can also help. If you are still uncomfortable, see a doctor.

### **A blow to your eye**

Apply an ice-cold compress for 15 minutes to reduce the pain and swelling. Blurred vision, double vision, or a change in the size or shape of your pupil may be signs of an internal injury that needs medical attention.

### **A cut on your eye or eyelid**

Lightly bandage cuts and seek medical help right away.

### **Fumes or caustic chemicals in your eye**

Flood your eye with clean water immediately. Use your fingers to keep your eye as wide open as possible. Hold your head under a tap or pour water into your eye from a clean container for at least 15 minutes, continuously and gently. Roll your eyeball to wash out your eye. Do not bandage it. After doing this, seek medical help immediately.

Remember, prevention is the best way to protect your sight. So plan ahead and practice smart eye safety.