

FIREWORKS AND EYE SAFETY



When we think of summer, we often think of outdoor activities and good times with family and friends. Each year we get together for barbeques, family reunions, games and Fourth of July celebrations. An integral part of many Independence Day celebrations is fireworks, which are exciting and spectacular to watch as colors explode across the night sky. Children of every age stand in awe of the fabulous displays, but with explosives comes the potential risk for injury.

Fireworks are involved in nearly 10,000 injuries treated in emergency rooms each year. More than 20% of these fireworks-related injuries involve the eyes. The majority of all fireworks-related injuries are from firecrackers, bottle rockets and sparklers. Seemingly harmless, sparklers pose the greatest threat to small children because parents view them as non-explosive and relatively safe. However, did you know sparklers spew arcs of light at temperatures that can reach 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit – hot enough to melt gold? Sparklers account for three-quarters of all fireworks injuries to children under the age of five.

Overall, the typical victims of fireworks are teen boys between the ages of 13 and 15. They sustain three-fourths of all fireworks-related eye injuries, mainly due to bottle rockets. Rockets are one of the most dangerous types of firework as they fly erratically and frequently injure bystanders; the bottles or cans used to launch them often explode and can shower fragments of glass or metal in all directions.

SO BEFORE LIGHTING THAT MATCH, look at the following statistics:

Fireworks are involved in nearly 10,000 injuries treated in emergency rooms each year. More than 20% of the fireworks-injuries involve the eyes.

- 21% of all fireworks-related injuries are eye-related
- 40% of victims are under the age of 15
- The greatest number of eye injuries are associated with firecrackers and bottle rockets
- Sparklers are the second highest cause of fireworks-related eye injuries

If fireworks are legal where you live and someone has plans to set them off, be sure these important safety tips are followed:

- Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks
- Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from the house, dry leaves and flammable materials
- Never try to relight fireworks that have not fully functioned
- Keep a bucket of water in case of a malfunction or fire

If a firework eye injury should occur, do not rub the eye. Shield the eye from pressure or rubbing action and do not try to rinse out the eye or apply ointment or medication to the eye. Seek medical attention immediately.

Please have a safe and enjoyable summer and happy Fourth of July!