

EYE-Q

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Holiday Eye Safety Tips

As we head into the holiday season, I would offer you a little practical advice about what to do if you or your family suffer an injury to your eyes during the holiday when your doctor's office may be closed. The most common problems that will occur include corneal abrasions (a scratch on the eye) and foreign bodies in the eye or under the eyelid. I have also included information about chemicals in the eye to provide you with a more complete first aid reminder.

Most of the time when you get something in your eye, your eye will tear and wash it out. In some cases, an object in your eye can scratch your cornea. A scratched cornea takes a couple of days to heal and may require treatment from your health care provider. If you get a chemical in your eye or something is imbedded in your eye, you need immediate medical treatment. Follow the instructions below for treating your eye.

If something small is embedded in your eye (such as a glass fragment), do not try to remove it. Cover the eye with a wet washcloth and have someone take you to an eye doctor or emergency room.

If a larger object is embedded it is better to take a small paper cup that will rest on the bones around the eye and completely cover the eye and tape it in place prior to heading to the emergency room. This will keep pressure off the object and prevent it from being pushed further into the eye. Never try to remove the object yourself.

To remove a loose eyelash, dirt particle, or other object in your eye:

1. Wash your hands before touching your eyes.
2. Look in a mirror and try to find the object in your eye.
3. Try the following methods to remove the object:
 - Try to blink to allow your tears to wash it out. Do not rub your eye.
 - If the particle is behind your upper eyelid, pull the upper lid out and over the lower lid and roll your eye upward. This can help get the particle to come off the upper lid and flush out of the eye.
 - If the object is in the corner of your eye or under your lower eyelid, remove it with a wet cotton swab or the corner of a clean cloth while holding the lower lid open.
 - Fill an eyecup or small juice glass with lukewarm water. Put your eye over the cup of water and open your eye to rinse your eye and flush the object out.
 - You can pour lukewarm water into your eye to flush out your eye.

A corneal abrasion will feel very much like there is something in the eye. Placing a cool moist washcloth over the closed eye will help to relieve the discomfort caused by the abrasion until your doctor can see you.

Chemical burns to the eyes are a medical emergency. Follow these steps if you get a chemical in your eyes.

1. Immediately flush the eye with water by holding your head under the faucet or by pouring water into your eye from a clean container. Keep your eye open while flushing with water.
2. Continue flushing out your eye for 10 to 15 minutes.
3. After you flush your eye out, call your health care provider or have someone take you to the emergency department or urgent care center.
4. If possible, take the container the chemical was in with you to the ER, urgent care center or your health care provider.

Call your eye doctor or health care provider if:

- You have severe or worsening eye pain.
- You still have eye pain or irritation 30 minutes after you have removed an object.
- You have glass or a chemical in your eye.
- You have questions or concerns.

The most important thing to do is enjoy your family, friends and the Christmas holidays safely and happily. May the blessings of the Christmas Season stay with you into the New Year.

If you have questions about your eye health e-mail Dr. Barowsky at doctom@tdkj.com and we'll try to answer your questions here at Eye-Q.