

EYE-Q

by R. Thomas Barowsky, MD

Safety Glasses Are Not Just For the Workplace

Continuing with our theme for April as National Home Eye Health Month I'd like to talk about the importance of safety eye wear when working around the home.

Too many times we think a project is only going to take a second to complete so why bother with all the safety equipment. What are the chances something could go wrong, right? Just remember that something as simple as the flip of a coin can come up on the wrong side 50% of the time. When we're talking about injuries that can permanently impair your vision, a little common sense and safety mindedness can go a long way.

The simplest way to protect your eyes when trying to make a dent in that increasingly long "honey do" list is to wear a pair of clear eye shields that you can buy at any hardware or home improvement store. I know they aren't stylish but they are made to fit over your regular glasses, have a clear wide angle view and are relatively lightweight compared to some of the more geeky looking Groucho Marx type safety glasses you can purchase through an optical shop. The best material for safety eyewear is polycarbonate plastic but high impact, shatter resistant products are also reasonable for the kind of trouble you might get yourself into around the house.

The best way to avoid trouble is to plan for it. This is especially true when it comes to protecting your eyes. If you are planning on using chemicals whether to enhance your lawn and garden, repel the insect hordes of Summer, clean up the driveway stains, power wash the last few years of dirt and mildew off the house, deck or patio or any other activity requiring chemical agents that are not typically friendly to the eyes, read and heed the instructions on the container.

Know ahead of time the recommended treatment should you accidentally splash something in your eyes and have it available before starting your work. If the container specifically states not to mix with other chemicals, then don't. If there are specific recommendations for storage follow them. Some chemicals become unstable or even volatile when stored in too hot an environment or even in the wrong type of container. You certainly don't want these things to blow up in your face as you're removing the top.

Make sure that the rakes, shovels and other implements of destruction are in good repair before venturing out to tackle that project. In spite of what my wife thinks, there is a proper tool for every job and having those tools in good repair means less risk of injury and a faster and better result. Loose or damaged parts can come off at the wrong time and tend to fly upward right where our eyes belong. Whether it's a weed whacker, a lawn mower a hoe or a rake, safety glasses will play an important part in protecting the eyes from these errant missiles.

Make sure that rocks, sticks and other debris are removed from the yard before cranking up the lawnmower. The chute might throw that debris away from you but if the wife is out there planting her bulbs or bringing you a glass of iced tea as a reward for your efforts, she may be in the line of fire. I'd hate to have something shatter the glass and waste all that good cold iced tea.

So be sure to wear the appropriate style of safety glasses, prepare for the unexpected and enjoy your activities in a safe and eye protecting way.

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.