

EYE-Q

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National Eye Safety Week

In recognition of National Eye Safety Awareness Week I am going to scare you once again with statistics and educate you on how not to become one; especially with Independence Day weekend upon us.

In 2005 a study was undertaken to look at eye injury reports seen nationwide in emergency rooms. During that period almost 1,000 injuries were reported and the numbers were compared to a similar study reported in 2004.

- Eighty-eight percent of the almost 1,000 eye injuries were accidental. The number of injuries from assaults fell almost 35 percent from the 2004 snapshot.
- Almost 70 percent of the injured people were not wearing protective eyewear, and most doctors felt that the eyewear would have prevented the injury.
- Fifty-two percent of the injured were between ages 18 and 45, with almost 30 percent between 30 and 40.
- Forty-two percent of the injuries occurred at home, with 47 percent between noon and 6 pm.

This tells us that we are our own worst enemy. Taking a little time to consider the risks to our eyes whether we are working in the yard, playing sports, or on the job can make all the difference. Here are a few tips to help protect your eyes:

- Check for rocks and debris before **mowing the lawn** or trimming the hedges. These objects can become dangerous projectiles when shot out from lawn mowers and trimmers such as weed whackers. Don't forget to wear goggles.
- **Bungee cords** are a common cause of severe eye injuries. Wear eye protection when using bungee cords.
- Buy **safe toys** for kids, avoiding those with sharp edges.
- Never use **fireworks**. Even sparklers burn hot enough to melt gold.
- Keep a pair of safety glasses or goggles with your **jumper cables**, and follow instructions carefully when jump-starting a dead car battery.
- Be careful with **household chemicals**, since many can burn your eyes' delicate tissues. Always wear goggles, read instructions carefully, work in well-ventilated areas and make sure the nozzle is pointed away from you.
- Always wear appropriate eye protection when playing **sports**. Have fun in the sun, but always wear **sunglasses** that block 99%-100% of UV-A and UV-B rays when outdoors for extended times.

With the Fourth of July holiday just around the corner, a few tips on fireworks and their dangers need to be mentioned. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission says that

more than 9,000 fireworks-related injuries are seen each year in emergency rooms, with nearly half being injuries to the head. Almost 30 percent of these are eye injuries, with a quarter leading to permanent loss of vision or even blindness.

The best way to prevent this is to forgo fireworks at home, in favor of public displays. You'll also be avoiding not only eye damage but lost fingers, burned skin, hearing loss and other terrible injuries. Safety experts offer these safety tips:

- Never let children play with any fireworks.
- View fireworks from at least 500 feet away.
- Only trained professionals should light fireworks.
- Don't touch any unexploded fireworks remains. Instead, notify the fire or police department.
- Never pick up an unexploded firecracker. It could still reignite and cause serious injury. It is better to douse it with water and leave it alone

In January 2004 the journal *Pediatrics* published results of a study by Dr. David Listman of New York's St. Barnabas Hospital on eye injuries caused by paintball activities. The statistics are alarming, because they are rising: such injuries treated in U.S. emergency rooms rose from about 545 in 1998 to more than 1,200 in 2000. The study also found that more than 40 percent of the injuries may have occurred in children, especially boys. Injuries included cataracts, retinal detachments, corneal abrasions, and more. The most important rule for paintball is, never take off your head shield, which should combine eye and ear protection. Commercial paintball fields require that you keep a head shield on at all times when you're in the playing area, even when a game has not yet begun. In fact, most documented paintball-related eye injuries have occurred when players removed their shield, even for just a few seconds. A detached retina, eye socket damage and eyeball rupture can result, with the risk of permanent vision loss.

Let's have fun this Summer by following these simple guidelines. A Bar-B-Q is always more tasty and more fun than the snack machine in the lobby of your local emergency room.

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.