



Eye Safety Is a Year-Round Concern

Nearly 2.5 million eye injuries occur each year in the United States. Ninety percent of these injuries can be prevented through understanding safety practices and using the proper protective eyewear.

Eye injury is a leading cause of visual impairment in one eye (monocular). It ranks second only to cataract as the most common cause of visual impairment overall. Nearly half of all eye injuries occur at home. More than one-fourth occur during sporting and recreational activities, or on streets and highways.

Eye injuries can happen at any time of year. Fireworks, sports, chemicals used for cleaning and lawn care, and home and auto maintenance all carry some risk of eye injury. Blunt objects are responsible for nearly one-third of reported eye injuries, including rocks, fists, baseballs, lumber, and fishing weights. Sharp objects like knives, sticks, scissors, and screwdrivers also present eye injury hazards.

Jumping car batteries and using power tools, paints, chemical cleaners, pesticides, fertilizers, lawn mowers, and adhesives are all hazards that can cause eye injuries around the home and yard. Nearly all sports and other leisure activities carry some risk of injury, as well. Adults should be role models for the young people in their lives and use goggles, face shields, or barriers to protect their eyes.

Adults can also play an important role in preventing eye injuries in children by supervising them at play and during sports. In the 2002 National Health Interview Survey, only 15 percent of children ages 6 to 17 years reported using protective eyewear always or most of the time when participating in activities that can cause eye

injury. Only one-third of people over 15 reported using protective eyewear in the same circumstances.

Children under 15 years of age account for nearly one-third of all hospital admissions for eye trauma, and 43 percent of sports and recreational eye injuries overall. Boys ages 11 to 15 were three to five times more likely to sustain eye injuries requiring hospital treatment than were girls of the same age.

Emerging concerns include corneal ulcers caused by the improper use of decorative contact lenses that can result in vision-threatening infections. Injuries from bungee cords and laser pointers are also on the rise.

Make vision a health priority. Protect yourself and the ones you love from eye injury. Wear protective eyewear.

For more information about protective eyewear, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org, sponsored by the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the Healthy Vision Consortium.

The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.