

Avoiding Fireworks Injuries

Thousands of eye injuries, which often result in permanent vision loss, occur each year from accidents with fireworks. Be safe this year and enjoy the public fireworks displays that many communities sponsor. They are presented by highly skilled professionals and they are bigger, brighter and more beautiful than home displays, as well as much less dangerous.

If fireworks are legal where you live and you decide to set them off on your own, be sure to follow these important safety tips:

- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks, even sparklers.
 - Read and follow all warnings and instructions carefully.
 - 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 handy in case of a malfunction or a fire.
- Always wear safety goggles when lighting fireworks to protect your eyes from flying sparks and particles of debris (inexpensive goggles are available at most hardware stores).

In case of an eye injury from a fireworks accident, you should:

- Seek professional attention from your eye care practitioner immediately (even for seemingly mild injuries).
- Do not rub the injured eye. This will often cause more damage.
- Protect the eye from pressure. In an emergency, you may tape the bottom of a foam cup or milk carton over the injured area until you can get professional attention.
- Do not apply any ointment or medication without your practitioner's instructions.