

~Attention Parents~  
**Summer Eye Safety**  
**Ohio Optometric Association**  
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As the long, warm days of summer approach and students engage in more outdoor activities, it's easy to forget the possibility of injury. Eye injuries in particular are more common in the summer. Flying debris from yard work, chemicals in swimming pools, sunshine that can sear delicate tissues -- summer is an obstacle course for your precious eyes. You can still have fun, but take steps to protect your eyes.

**Facts**

- 18,000 sports-related eye injuries are treated in emergency rooms across the country each year for those under the age of 15.
- More than 50,000 children in America suffer eye injuries each year - 90% of these are preventable.

Eye injuries are one of the leading causes of visual impairment in children. Here are a few ways to protect your eyes:

**1. During Sports**

- The bigger the ball, the less likely an eye injury. According to the U.S. Eye Injury Registry, 5% of eye injuries result from baseballs. Helmets prevent head injury, but often don't protect the eyes. Make sure your child is wearing a polycarbonate face guard or other certified safe protection attached to the batting helmet.
- Mother's warning regarding BB gun injuries to the eye is worth remembering. Now add paintball to this category. Always wear impact resistant goggles or a facemask.

**2. While Doing Home Projects**

- When weed whacking or mowing a flying rock could go sideways and hit a child nearby. The person operating the equipment should wear eye protection, and children should not be allowed nearby while a lawn mower or lawn trimmer is being operated.
- A common injury in the summertime is a scratch on the surface of the eye (corneal abrasion). This often involves a foreign body, such as a tiny piece of metal, leaf, grain of sand or other object. Sanding, spray painting, working under cars, leaf blowing or lawn mowing are frequent activities that result in corneal abrasions. Safety goggles with polycarbonate lenses and side shields should be worn whenever there is a risk of particles flying. If you get a foreign body in your eye, it may not cause immediate pain but start to ache later. Material embedded in the eye is usually too small to see by the naked eye. If the pain symptoms are not resolved after irrigating the eye thoroughly with water (or saline), see your optometrist.

### **3. From the Sun**

-The danger posed by UV radiation to your skin can harm your eyes and affect your vision. Scientific evidence is showing that exposure to both UV-A and UV-B can have adverse long- and short-term effects on your eyes and vision. The effects of UV radiation are cumulative. The longer your eyes are exposed to UV radiation, the greater the risk of developing such conditions as cataracts or macular degeneration in later life.

-Children should wear UV blocking sunglasses to reduce the amount of light entering the eye, protect against harmful UV light, decrease glare, and increase contrast. Constant exposure to bright sunlight can damage the cornea, the lens and the retina. A dark lens does not necessarily have UV protection -- look for lenses that absorb 99 to 100 percent of UV light. Wear sunglasses and/or a hat especially during long hours outside to avoid burned corneas which will result in excruciating pain.

### **4. From Chemicals**

-Keep those pesky summer bugs at bay without damaging your eyes. Spray bug repellent into your hands and then apply to the face. If you get bug spray or pesticide in the eyes, flush with lukewarm water for 15 minutes.

-If your eyes sting from swimming in a pool, it may mean the chemicals aren't balanced. If the pool water hurts your eyes, get out of the pool. If the eyes continue to burn, rinse immediately with clean water. If the stinging persists for hours, see an eye doctor. To soothe irritated eyes, use artificial tears (not anti-redness drops).

-Don't wear contact lenses in the pool. The surface tension holding the contacts in will be washed away by water. Infection can also result from untreated lake or pond water getting under the lens.

### **5. Around Fireworks**

Of the 12,000 emergency room visits for fireworks-related injuries each year, 20 percent involve the eyes. Fireworks and sparklers should be enjoyed from a distance.

### **Reminder**

-See your doctor of optometry regularly for an eye examination.

-Most eye injuries are preventable, but not all eye injuries are reversible. Eye protection, education and early treatment are the keys to prevention and minimizing the damage of eye injuries. The start of summer is a good time to revisit these issues with your children and family so everyone can enjoy the season and protect their eyes!

