

## Information for Patients

# General Information on Eye Safety

You have attended the Emergency Eye Department (EED) following an injury to your eye. In order to prevent any future eye injuries, please read this information leaflet as it contains helpful advice.

90% of all eye injuries could have been prevented.

## Eye injuries at work

### What contributes to eye injuries at work?

**Not wearing eye protection or not wearing the appropriate eye protection.**

It is reported that three out of every five workers injured were not wearing eye protection at the time of the accident. About 40% of the injured workers were wearing some form of eye protection when the accident occurred. However, these workers were wearing the wrong kind of eye protection, wearing ill-fitting eye protection, or wearing eye protection that was badly damaged.

### What causes eye injuries at work?

Eye injuries at work can be caused by flying objects, falling objects or sparks striking the eye. They can also be caused by chemicals being splashed into the eyes. Radiation from welding equipment can also cause injuries to the eye.

Eye injuries can also be caused by:

- Taking risks and not paying enough attention to the job.
- Working when you are tired and stressed.
- Rushing to finish a job and carelessness.
- Inadequate knowledge on how to operate the tools and machinery that you are using.

- Poor lighting in the workplace.
- Poor eyesight not corrected by glasses.

### **How can eye injuries at work be prevented?**

Eye injuries can be prevented by wearing appropriate eye protection, through education and training and proper maintenance of all safety equipment.

- **Wearing appropriate eye protection**

It is a **legal** requirement for **all** employers to provide every employee with the appropriate safety equipment. All eye safety wear must be appropriate for the hazard encountered and properly fitted. Surveys have shown that 94% of eye injuries occur from objects or chemicals going around or under the eye protection.

As a general rule if you are working in an area that has particles, flying objects or dust, or if you yourself are grinding, hammering or chiselling, you must at least wear safety glasses with side protection (side shields).

If you are working with chemicals, you should wear goggles.

If you are working near hazardous radiation (welding, lasers, or fibre optic) you must use special purpose safety glasses, goggles, face shields or helmets designed for that task.

- **Education and training**

All employees should be taught when appropriate safety equipment must be worn. This includes the different types of eye protection for different hazards.

Education and training must also include equipment and first aid measures.

Employees should know the eye safety dangers at work and where possible eliminate hazards before starting work, for example the use of a machine guard or work screens.

## **Maintenance of safety equipment**

It is important that all safety equipment is properly maintained. Scratched and dirty eye protection can reduce vision, can cause glare and can contribute to accidents.

## **General advice**

- It is advisable that you get an eyesight test every 2 years. If you wear glasses or have an existing eye problem it is advisable you see an optician more frequently.
- Never work in an area where the lighting is poor.
- Take breaks to avoid fatigue.

## **Eye injuries at home**

### **What contributes to eye injuries at home?**

The main causes of eye injuries occurring in the home are as a result of the following:

- Undertaking Do It Yourself (DIY) activities and not wearing the appropriate eye protection.
- Domestic injuries include those from gardening, cleaning products, blunt or penetrating eye trauma from household items.
- Injuries from pets' claws.
- Fingernails (a child's or your own).
- Tripping or falling.
- From beauty products such as hair brushes, mascara wand, eyeliner pencil.
- And other causes such as putting superglue or cosmetic products into the eyes since these items are very similar to eye drops.

### **How can eye injuries at home be prevented?**

#### **• DIY activities**

- When carrying out any DIY activities, always wear the appropriate eye protection. Many DIY activities such as hammering, chiselling and grinding can result in eye injuries. Eye protection must be well fitting and suitable for the type of DIY activities being carried out. Throw out any eye protection that has been badly scratched or is ill-fitting.

- Keep tools in good working order and do not improvise.
- Carry out all work in good lighting.
- Always ensure that protective guards are on all power equipment and fit a circuit breaker where appropriate.
- When carrying out activities involving chemicals, ensure that you wear eye protection to avoid splashes. Always read the manufacturer's instructions. Store all chemicals correctly.
- Hands should be thoroughly washed after using any chemicals.
- Do not overstretch yourself when carrying out DIY. If you do not know what you are doing, get a qualified person in to do the job.

- **Gardening activities**

- When gardening, take extra care when trimming and pruning shrubs and bushes and wear appropriate eye protection when using the garden strimmer.
- Before mowing the lawn, check for any small objects such as stones as these can potentially fly into your eyes during mowing.
- Avoid and prune any low hanging branches.
- Any garden canes should be visible and the tops of all canes should be capped.

### **General advice**

- Take care when applying your eye make-up.
- Do not store your eye drops in the same place as other similar household items such as superglue.
- Make sure that all of your carpets and rugs around the house are properly fitted or have an anti-slip mat underneath.
- Wear well-fitting bedroom slippers when indoors.
- Keep children's nails short.
- Never look directly at the sun, especially when there is an eclipse.

## **Eye injuries from sports**

Sports related eye injuries are becoming more frequent as more people undertake sporting activities. Sports injuries are usually as a result of the ball or racquet/bat hitting the eye, or a team mate or opponent poking the eye with their finger, fist or other body part. Such sports require protective eyewear. Extra caution should also be taken by those who have an existing eye problem whilst participating in sports. This includes people wearing contact lenses and glasses.

The best prevention of eye injury while involved in sports and recreation is to wear specially designed protective eyewear. While this cannot eliminate the risk altogether, it can greatly reduce the chance of eye injuries. Regular glasses and contact lenses do not offer adequate eye protection from sport injuries and in some cases the glass or contact lenses could even shatter and cut the eye.

If you have an existing eye problem or have had eye surgery, please consult your eye doctor prior to commencing your sport.

Seek medical advice straight away if you have suffered an eye injury whilst playing sports.

## **Eye injuries in children**

The number of eye injuries occurring in children has risen over the last few years. The different types of eye injuries that we see in our Eye Emergency Department include eye injuries from sports, fireworks, fights, toys, chemicals, cigarette burns and many more.

### **General advice in preventing eye injuries in children**

- Children must always wear recommended protective eye wear during appropriate sports and recreational activities.
- Select toys that are appropriate for the child's age and activity level.
- Provide adequate supervision during activities that use sharp objects such as scissors.
- Children should always be properly supervised when playing with toys such as bows and arrows etc.
- Keep all hazardous cleaning equipment out of the reach of children.
- Children must wear protective eye wear when performing laboratory or scientific experiments in school.

- Keep children away from fireworks.
- Take care when you are smoking and avoid smoking around children.
- Take your children for regular eyesight examinations.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.