

Eye injuries in children

Information for patients, parents and guardians

There are about 1000 serious accidental eye injuries in children in the UK every year. Children most at risk of accidents are those aged four years old and under. This factsheet highlights some of the common causes of eye injuries, ways to prevent eye injuries and what you can do at home to reduce the risk of further injury.

Sport related injuries

Sport and leisure related injuries are the most common cause of accidental injury in children, in particular older children and boys. These can be prevented with the use of suitable protective equipment for the sport or activity. Please be aware that all equipment should meet EU and other regulated safety standards.

High-risk sports include:

- cricket
- hockey
- squash
- any sport involving small fast projectiles (paintballing, martial arts and boxing)

Nerf gun accidents affecting the eyes can cause serious injuries, long-lasting damage or even blindness. It's important to supervise children using Nerf guns and ensure appropriate protective equipment is used.

Chemical injuries

Chemicals that are used around the home can pose harm to the eye. Common dangers are kitchen and toilet cleaners, and laundry detergent capsules (which to younger

children may look like sweets). Glue and craft equipment also pose a risk, as they can stick eyelids together.

Statistics have shown that the number of children with these injuries is increasing, so it is very important to store these items out of the reach of children.

Other injuries

Other common eye injuries we see in the eye casualty include:

- scratches from fireworks and tree branches
- accidental injuries through children playing with siblings or other children
- injuries from objects, such as pencils and pens
- foreign bodies in the eye (grit or sand)

What should I do if my child gets an eye injury?

You should immediately wash out any chemicals that have gone into your child's eye with water, then take them to the eye casualty or emergency department of your nearest hospital.

All eye injuries should be checked by a medical professional to prevent potential long-term damage.

How can eye injuries be prevented?

- Store household chemicals in a safe place. Please be aware that children can get into child-proof safety lids. We recommend putting them in a locked cupboard.

- Keep chemicals out of your child's reach.
- Make sure your child uses protective eyewear and equipment when playing sports.
- Supervise your child when they are playing with toys or Nerf guns.
- Make sure your child has age-appropriate toys.
- Make sure all safety equipment meets national standards.
- Make sure sharp edges, such as table corners, are covered if your child is toddling around.
- Be wary of dogs that are not known to you.

Treatment for eye injuries

Your child may have been given some eye drops to help heal the front of their eye that has been injured or other medications to aid healing of the eye. Occasionally, if the injury is serious, your child may need to have surgery.

When should I be concerned and seek further help or advice?

Your child's eye should heal over a few days depending on the injury. However, you should seek further help or advice if your child has any of the following symptoms:

- pain or worsening pain
- discharge from the eye
- swollen eyelids
- persistent redness to the eye
- reduced or blurry vision
- loss of vision

If your child has any pain, you can give them some pain relief, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Please follow the instructions on the packaging and do not exceed the recommended daily dose.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the eye casualty team.

Eye casualty triage/advice line
Telephone: **023 8120 6592**

The triage/advice line is available 24 hours a day. However, after 7pm the voicemail will advise you that the eye casualty is closed. In this instance, please listen to the full message and select the option for the 'eye short stay unit'.

Eye casualty offers a walk-in service between 8am and 6pm. After this time, please call the number above.

Eye casualty
Level B (eye unit)
Southampton General Hospital
Tremona Road
Southampton
SO16 6YD

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/eye-injuries

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital

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2362