

Holiday or any day, protect your eyes

Study: Most injuries happen at home

By Angela Haupt
USA TODAY

Concern about eye injuries may surface with Fourth of July fireworks, but it's more likely for such injuries to occur at home in the kitchen, garden or garage, an eye doctors' association reports today.

"People think they're most at risk in the workplace or playing sports," says Andrew Iwach, spokesman for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. But home is the top spot for such injuries. "And it's not because of exotic behavior. It's very routine things that can be extraordinarily caustic."

The academy now recommends that every household own at least one pair of protective eyewear approved by the American National Standards Institute. That's based on results of two surveys, both released today.

The Eye Injury Snapshot, conducted by the academy and the American Society of Ocular Trauma, examined 765 eye injuries reported by 775 doctors during two weeks in the spring. Among its findings:

- ▶ Nearly half (44.7%) of reported eye injuries occurred in the home.
- ▶ Males sustained nearly 75% of those injuries.
- ▶ The most common place of eye injury was the yard or garden (39.4%). More than a third of home-based injuries took place in living areas such as the kitchen or bathroom. Most were caused by activities such as home repairs, cooking and cleaning.
- ▶ Nearly 15% of injuries led to moderate or severe eye damage, including loss of vision.

A companion survey found that most people consider eye injuries unlikely, but 25% had suffered such an injury or knew someone who had.

Protective eyewear is sold for as little as \$2 and should be worn when dealing with high-velocity machines and chemicals, Iwach says.

The 1,500 fireworks-related eye injuries each year are only 1% of all eye injuries, Iwach says.