

# This Fourth of July, leave fireworks to professionals

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Thousands of accidents each year underscore the danger of fireworks. In 2014, 11 people died and an estimated 10,500 were treated in emergency departments for fireworks-related injuries in the U.S. Statistics show the typical victim of a firework injury is a 25- to 44-year-old male.

In an effort to reduce these preventable injuries, Mayo Clinic Health System optometrists and ophthalmologists encourage families to attend their local [fireworks](#) displays instead of using fireworks at home. This recommendation is made as part of Fireworks Eye Safety Month, sponsored by the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

"When playing with fireworks, injuries to the head, eyes and hands are all very possible," says Doug Wesely, optometrist at Mayo Clinic Health System. "And not only are you at risk of harming yourself, you're at risk of harming others."

Fireworks can be especially damaging to your eyes. According to Wesely, the makeup of a firework - gunpowder, sulfur and charcoal - is significantly irritating to the eyes. He says 19 percent of fireworks-related injuries affect the eyes.

In the unfortunate event you end up with an [eye injury](#) during your Fourth of July fireworks show, Wesely offers these tips:

- Don't rub. Rubbing your eye may increase bleeding or worsen injury.
- Don't rinse. Attempting to rinse out your eyes can be even more damaging than rubbing.
- Don't apply pressure. Keep your hands away from your eyes - you could add more bacteria and irritants by touching your eyes.
- Don't stop for over-the-counter medication. Instead, head straight to the emergency department.

Although illegal fireworks, bottle rockets and Roman candles account for the majority of injuries, seemingly harmless sparklers also cause numerous injuries each year. Because these sparklers can be found at just about every Fourth of July celebration, they account for the most injuries to children under the age of 5.

"This Fourth of July, leave the fireworks to the professionals," says Wesely. "Get your family and friends together and attend your local fireworks display. They'll be bigger, better and, most importantly, safer for you and your family."

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