

# WELLNESSMONTHLY

Why Take a Chance? Protect Your Eyes | March 2019



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## Why Take a Chance? Protect Your Eyes

*This edition of WorkCare's Wellness Monthly focuses on eye injury prevention and management. March is Save Your Vision Month, sponsored by the [American Optometric Association](#) to increase awareness about eye care, and Workplace Eye Safety Month, an annual observance supported by organizations including [Prevent Blindness](#) and the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#). To learn more, refer to WorkCare's Fact Sheet on [A Visionary Plan for Eye Protection](#).*

Many occupations, hobbies and sports require the use of safety glasses, goggles and/or a face shield to protect the eyes from injury.

However, even with the widespread availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) for all types of exposure risks, hundreds of thousands of preventable eye injuries occur annually in the U.S. In the workplace, it is estimated that more than 2,000 people a day injure their eyes, resulting in nearly 19,400 lost work days a year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In about 90 percent of incidents, minor to severe eye injuries, including permanent vision loss, could have been prevented with consistent use of properly fitted, appropriate PPE.

### Be Aware

The selection of PPE depends on likely exposure hazards while at work, around the house or during recreational activities. Protective eyewear may be made of glass, plastic or polycarbonate. It's also important to have situational awareness and use common sense when hazards are present.

Liquids or foreign bodies in the eye, flash burns and corneal scratches are commonly occurring eye injuries. Causes include chemical, grease and oil splashes; steam, vapor or mist; ultraviolet or infrared radiation exposure, and airborne wood fragments, sparks or metal chips. Blows received during personal assaults and contact sports, and objects such as firecrackers, ammunition, darts, and materials with springs or elasticity are also associated with eye injuries.

People in certain occupations – including health care, emergency response, laboratory, cleanup/janitorial and animal handling – also must take precautions to reduce exposure to contagious diseases that can be spread through contact with infected blood or respiratory droplets via eye mucous membranes, or from touching eyes with contaminated fingers.

## If You Get an Eye Injury

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, it can be difficult to tell how seriously an eye may be injured. In such cases, it's advisable to seek care. Eye specialists recommend getting an immediate medical evaluation for:

- Ongoing eye pain
- Trouble seeing
- Cut or torn eyelid
- One eye that does not move as well as the other
- One eye that sticks out of the eye socket farther than the other
- Unusual pupil size or shape
- Blood in the clear part of the eye
- Something in the eye or under a lid that tears, rinsing and blinking don't remove
- Metal, glass and other man-made materials that can become embedded in the eye and cause more damage

Without medical advice, do not apply eye drops, ointment or medication to an affected eye. Prescription medications should only be used for the condition for which they are prescribed, not for emergency treatment.

There are some first-aid measures you can take for relatively minor eye complaints. In all instances, do not rub or apply pressure to the eye:

1. For scratches, flush with saline solution or clean water. Blink. Pull the upper eyelid over the lower eyelid. Wear sunglasses for light sensitivity, but do not wear contact lenses.
2. To remove a particle, blink several times and allow tears to flush the eye, or use eyewash, saline solution or running tap water. Lifting the upper eyelid over the lashes of the lower lid may also help remove the particle.
3. For a blow to the eye, gently apply a cold compress to reduce pain and swelling. An exam is advised because even a light blow can cause a serious injury.
4. For a cut or puncture wound, gently place a shield over the eye and seek medical care. The bottom of a clean paper cup taped to bones around the eye can be used. Do not press the cover against the eye. Avoid taking an over-the-counter remedy that may thin your blood.
5. For chemical burns and splashes, immediately flush the eye with copious amounts of clean water; seek medical care.

## Protect Yourself From Digital Eye Strain

### The 20-20-20 Rule

Even if your vision isn't quite 20/20, it's important to know and practice the 20-20-20 rule, which helps protect your eyes from blue light's negative health effects.



After 20 minutes of exposure



Take a 20-second break



To view something 20 feet away

## Electronic Devices

For people who spend most of their day on computers and other electronic devices, ergonomic and personal adjustments to reduce the likelihood of vision-related complaints such as headaches, fatigue, tired eyes and difficulty focusing are recommended.

The American Optometric Association encourages application of the 20-20-20 rule. Wearing glasses prescribed for computer use; adjusting the computer monitor height and distance; reducing glare and drinking plenty of water are also advised.

Finally, comprehensive injury prevention and eye care management includes getting an annual exam to assess the need for corrective lenses and detect early signs of conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts or macular degeneration.