

Ocular First Aid

When eye injuries occur, knowing how to deal with them can mean the difference between minor eye damage and permanent injury, or even blindness. Here are some first aid suggestions for eye injuries. But, please remember, these suggestions are only first aid. It is important for you to contact your eye-care practitioner as soon as possible for any eye injuries.

If you have a foreign object in your eye, don't rub it. Lift your upper eyelid outward and gently pull it down over the lower lash. This causes tears to flow which may wash the object out of your eye. You may have to repeat this several times. If the object does not wash out, contact your optometrist. Do not try to remove a particle that is embedded. You can cause more damage. If you are wearing contact lenses, remove the lens and clean it thoroughly before putting it back in your eye. If discomfort persists, remove, clean again and reapply. If discomfort continues, remove the lens and call your optometrist.

For chemicals splashed in your eyes, immediately flush your eyes with cool water for at least 15 minutes. If possible, hold your head under a slowly running tap, or pour water slowly from a glass or clear container. Seek professional attention immediately. If you are wearing contact lenses, remove them immediately. Then flush your eyes and seek professional help as described.

A blow to your face resulting in a black eye can be treated with cold compresses for about 15 minutes every hour. Your eye should be checked by your eye-care practitioner for internal damage. If the blow breaks your contact lenses, try to remove pieces of the lens immediately. Rinsing with water will help. Then call your optometrist.

Do not try to treat a cut, laceration or penetrating eye injury. Do not flush the eye with water or put any medicine in the eye. If you are wearing a contact lens, don't try to remove it. Gently cover the eye with a bandage or gauze pad and go directly to your doctor or a nearby hospital.

Remember, the best way to treat eye injuries is to prevent them from happening in the first place. Don't forget to be aware of potential eye hazards and wear appropriate eye protection.