

First Aid for Eye Emergencies

Knowing what to do for an eye emergency can save valuable time and possibly prevent vision loss. Here are some instructions for basic eye injury first aid.

Be Prepared

- Wear eye protection for all hazardous activities and sports-at school, home, and on the job.
- Stock a first aid kit with a rigid eye shield and commercial eyewash before an eye injury happens.
- **DO NOT** assume that any eye injury is harmless. When in doubt, see a doctor immediately.

Chemical Burns to the Eye

In all cases of eye contact with chemicals:

- Immediately flush the eye with water or any other drinkable liquid. Hold the eye under a faucet or shower, or pour water into the eye using a clean container. Keep the eye open and as wide as possible while flushing. Continue flushing for at least 15 minutes.
- **DO NOT** use an eyecup.
- If a contact lens is in the eye, begin flushing over the lens immediately. This may wash away the lens.
- **DO NOT** bandage the eye.
- Seek immediate medical treatment after flushing.

Specks in the Eye

- **DO NOT** rub the eye
- Try to let tears wash the speck out or use an eyewash.
- Try lifting the upper eyelid outward and down over the lower lid.
- If the speck does not wash out, keep the eye closed, bandage it lightly, and see a doctor.

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Blows to the Eye

- Apply a cold compress without putting pressure on the eye. Crushed ice in a plastic bag can be taped to the forehead to rest gently on the injured eye.
- In cases of pain, reduced vision, or discoloration (black eye), seek emergency medical care. Any of these symptoms could mean internal eye damage.

Cuts and Punctures of the Eye or Eyelid

- **DO NOT** wash out the eye with water or any other liquid.
- **DO NOT** try to remove an object that is stuck in the eye.
- Cover the eye with a rigid shield without applying pressure. The bottom half of a paper cup can be used.
- See a doctor at once.

