

Eye Injury

What is an eye injury?

Eye injuries are usually cuts, scrapes or bruises around the eye. When your child is injured in or around the eye, the main concern is possible damage to your child's vision. Older children can tell you if their vision is blurred or out of focus. Test your child's vision at home by covering each eye in turn and having your child look at a distant object. Children less than 3 years old usually need to be examined by a doctor to answer this question.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Cuts or scrapes** First wash your hands. Protect the eye with a clean cloth, then wash the wound vigorously with liquid soap and water for 5 minutes. Rinse the wound well. Then apply pressure for 10 minutes with a sterile gauze to stop bleeding. Leave the area exposed to the air. Antiseptic ointments are usually unnecessary. Don't use alcohol or Merthiolate on open wounds because they sting and damage normal tissue.
- **Swelling or bruises with intact skin** Swelling usually follows injury to the soft tissues or bone around the eye. Apply ice for 20 minutes. Give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain if necessary. Don't be surprised if a black eye develops over the next 2 days. A subconjunctival hemorrhage (bruise of the white of the eyeball) also shouldn't cause undue concern. These unsightly bruises are harmless. They do not spread to inside the eye and clear up in about 2 weeks.

How can I help prevent eye injuries?

Objects that penetrate the eyeball often result in loss of vision. Don't buy your child an air-powered gun (BB gun). Also don't allow your child to play near someone using a lawn mower.

When should I call my child's health care provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- There is any injury to the eye itself.
- The skin is split open and may need stitches.
- Vision is blurred in either eye.