

FOR THE 4TH OF JULY, KEEP YOUR EYE ON SAFETY

July 2008 - For 4th of July celebrations, the American Optometric Association (AOA) suggests that families and friends stay away from private firework use and instead enjoy professional displays to protect and preserve eyesight.

Each year over the holiday, thousands of adults and children are seriously injured as a result of fireworks and pyrotechnic devices. Many burns and injuries affect eyesight, permanently damaging and in some cases blinding the victims.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), during the 2005 calendar year (the most recent year statistics were available), fireworks were involved in an estimated 10,800 injuries that were treated in U. S. hospital emergency departments. The CPSC reports approximately 1,600 cases were eye injuries. Most of these eye injuries were contusions and lacerations.

Believe it or not, sparklers are the highest cause of fireworks injuries requiring trips to the emergency room. Sparklers can easily burn children since they heat up to 1800 degrees (hot enough to melt gold.)

And, surprising to many, bystanders are not safe from injury. Data from the United States Eye Injury Registry shows that bystanders are injured by fireworks one-half of the time.

About two-thirds of the fireworks-related injuries were burns, and most of the burns involved the hands, **eyes** and head/face. Nearly half (45%) of the victims were under 15 years old, and twice as many males were injured as females.

Be safe and protect your eyes this 4th of July. Go to professional displays and enjoy the spectacle in the sky.

Please call 703-827-5454 or 877-234-2020 to schedule an appointment with our doctors.

**8180 Greensboro Drive, #140
McLean, VA 22102
703-827-5454**

**5842 Hubbard Drive
Rockville, MD 20852
301-770-6888**

**1715 N. George Mason Drive, #206
Arlington, VA 22205
703-525-4411**

Affiliated Practices:

Falls Church, VA

Richmond, VA

Washington, DC

Baltimore, MD

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINE EYE EXAMINATIONS

We often seek medical attention if our eyes hurt, or turn red, or if our vision becomes blurry. But we don't often get our eyes examined regularly if we are not having any problems with them. Routine eye examinations are important even if our eyes and vision are fine—because many blinding eye diseases have few or no warning signs until they have taken away some or all of our vision.

The most common cause of blindness in the United States is diabetic eye disease. In the early stages, when it is most easily treated, diabetic eye disease has no symptoms. The only way for a diabetic to know if he or she has diabetic eye disease is to get routine eye examinations at least once a year.

The second most common cause of blindness in the US is glaucoma. Glaucoma is called the silent thief of sight because it has no symptoms at all until the disease is very advanced. And in glaucoma, once vision is lost, it can never be regained, so finding it in the advanced stage is often too late to save the sight. Glaucoma is common in older adults, but can occur at any age. The only way to know if you have glaucoma is to have a comprehensive eye examination on a regular basis.

The most common cause of blindness among Americans over age 50 is age-related macular degeneration. In the early stages of macular degeneration, treatments can be used to prevent the disease from getting worse. But the early stages of macular degeneration have no symptoms. The only way to know if you have early macular degeneration—and to start treatment to prevent it from getting worse—is to have routine eye examinations even if your eyes seem fine.

To be safe, you should have a thorough eye examination on a regular basis to be sure your eyes are as healthy as you think they are. Finding eye diseases as early as possible gives you the best chance of saving your sight.

How often should you have a routine eye examination? Children should have their first examination, including a measurement of vision, before they begin kindergarten. Their vision should be measured at least every few years to make sure that sight is developing normally. It is a good idea for teens to have a full eye examination before beginning to drive, to make sure they will be safe behind the wheel. After that, adults should consider having an eye exam every year or two beginning at age 40, and at least once a year after age 50 when the blinding diseases listed above become more common.

There are a few exceptions to these guidelines. People with diabetes should have an eye examination every year starting when they are diagnosed with diabetes, no matter how old they are. And people who have relatives with eye diseases, such as glaucoma or macular degeneration, should have examinations once a year beginning as soon as age 30.

Please call 703-827-5454 or 877-234-2020 to schedule an appointment with our doctors.

**8180 Greensboro Drive, #140
McLean, VA 22102
703-827-5454**

**5842 Hubbard Drive
Rockville, MD 20852
301-770-6888**

**1715 N. George Mason Drive, #206
Arlington, VA 22205
703-525-4411**

Affiliated Practices:
Falls Church, VA Richmond, VA Washington, DC Baltimore, MD