



Disclaimer: This fact sheet is for educational purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is correct for you or your child.

B: Facts for parents and carers— prevention of childhood eye injury

Fact 1: Ways in which children most commonly injure their eyes

- The eye can be injured in many ways. This ranges from something simple like a scratch to the cornea (clear front part of the eye), which will heal fairly quickly, to a penetrating eye injury which may need surgery.
- The bones around the eye are also at risk from blunt objects. These bones can easily fracture.
- A child is more likely to injure their eye in an environment in which there is poor adult supervision.
- Most commonly the child will injure their own eye or another child's eye by using an object inappropriately. A child might, for example, use a stick or a knife as a toy.
- It is important to know that any eye injury may lead to poor vision, blindness or even the removal of the eye.

Fact 2: Common objects that can cause harm

- Any object can cause an eye injury.
- The most serious eye injuries are usually caused by sharp items such as pens, pencils, scissors, knives, sticks and metal objects.

Fact 3: Children at highest risk of eye injury

Australian studies have found that the groups at highest risk of an eye injury are:

- children aged between 3 and 9 years, with a peak at 5 years.
- boys—who are three times more likely to suffer an eye injury than girls.

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Fact 4: Eye risks for children 1–2 years

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- They are usually well supervised, so eye injuries are often caused by an older child or when an adult leaves a potentially dangerous item within the child’s reach.
- They might walk or fall into things at their eye level, such as a sharp corner of a low table.

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Fact 5: Eye risks for children 3–8 years

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- They often become involved in more risky and dangerous play and may not be as well supervised by adults as younger children.
- They are more likely to injure their eyes using objects such as sticks, stones, pens and knives as weapons.
- Sports injuries usually occur at this age due to limited skills or carelessness.

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Fact 6: Eye risks for children 9-16 years

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- They are often the least well supervised by adults and may have access to more dangerous goods such as chemicals, fireworks and very sharp items.
- They might injure their eyes playing sport at a more physically demanding and competitive level.

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Fact 7: Locations where eye injuries in children most commonly occur

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- Home, both indoors and outdoors, is the most common place for an eye injury.
- Sporting venues are also a likely place for an eye injury to occur.
- Schools and childcare centres are relatively safe places, as children have limited access to objects that can cause harm and have high levels of supervision.

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Fact 8: Time of day when childhood eye injuries most commonly occur

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Australian studies have shown that children most commonly sustain eye injuries on the weekend, between the hours of 4–6 pm.

Fact 9: Protecting children from eye injuries

- Always supervise your child at home, both indoors and outdoors.
- Children will often suffer an eye injury from copying an adult's behaviour, so make sure you are a good 'eye safe' role model.
- Remove or protect all indoor and outdoor objects that are at your child's eye level and can cause harm.
- Ensure all furniture has rounded edges, or that you have adequately padded those pieces that do not.
- Remove all hazardous chemicals and ensure that they are located in locked cupboards well out of your child's reach.
- Remove any broken toys from your home.
- Trim low hanging tree branches back to the trunk.
- Children should wear protective eyewear and be situated at a safe distance or inside when an adult is mowing the lawn.
- Encourage your child to wear sunglasses and a hat when outdoors.
- Teach your child to take care in the presence of animals.
- If your child has poor vision in one eye it is recommended that you speak to your eye specialist about extra eye protection when playing sport.

Fact 10: What to do if a child suffers an eye injury

- Apply the appropriate first aid (see first aid fact sheet) and seek medical attention immediately.

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The Statewide Ophthalmology Service (SOS), a network of the Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI), a statutory health corporation, NSW HEALTH.