

FIREWORKS SAFETY

With warm weather and family events, the Fourth of July can be a fun time with great memories. But before your family celebrates this year, make sure everyone knows about fireworks safety.

If not handled properly, fireworks can cause burn and eye injuries in children and adults. There were 9,300 fireworks injuries treated in hospital emergency departments in 2003, and 6 deaths linked to fireworks.

The best thing you can do to protect your child is not to use any fireworks at home period. Attend public fireworks displays, and leave the lighting to the professionals.

Lighting fireworks at home isn't even legal in many areas, so if you still want to use them, be sure to check with your local police department first. If they're legal where you live, keep these safety tips in mind:

- Children should never play with fireworks. Things like firecrackers, rockets, and sparklers are just too dangerous. If you give your child a sparkler, make sure your child keeps it outside and away from the face, clothing, and hair. Sparklers can reach 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit (982 degrees Celsius) - hot enough to melt gold.
- Buy only legal fireworks (legal fireworks have a label with the manufacturer's name and directions; illegal ones are unlabeled), and store them in a cool, dry place. Illegal fireworks usually go by the names M-80, M100, blockbuster, or quarterpounder. These explosives were banned in 1966, but still account for many fireworks injuries.
- Never try to make your own fireworks.
- Always use fireworks outside and have a bucket of water and a hose nearby in case of accidents.

- Steer clear of others - fireworks have been known to backfire or shoot off in the wrong direction. Never throw or point fireworks at someone, even in jest.
- Don't hold fireworks in your hand or have any part of your body over them while lighting. Wear some sort of eye protection, and avoid carrying fireworks in your pocket - the friction could set them off.
- Point fireworks away from homes, and keep away from brush and leaves and flammable substances. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that local fire departments respond to more 50,000 [fires](#) caused by fireworks each year.
- Light one firework at a time (not in glass or metal containers), and **never** relight a dud.
- Don't allow your child to pick up pieces of fireworks after an event. Some may still be ignited and can explode at any time.
- Soak all fireworks in a bucket of water before throwing them in the trash can.
- Think about your [pet](#). Animals have sensitive ears and can be extremely frightened or stressed on the Fourth of July. Keep your pet indoors to reduce the risk that the pet will run loose or get injured.

If your child is injured by fireworks, immediately go to a doctor or hospital. If an [eye injury](#) occurs, don't allow your child to touch or rub it, as this may cause even more damage. Also, don't flush the eye out with water or attempt to put any ointment on it. Instead, cut out the bottom of a paper cup, place it around the eye, and immediately seek medical attention - your child's eyesight may depend on it. If it's a [burn](#), remove clothing from the burned area and run cool, not cold, water over the burn (do not use ice). Call your child's doctor immediately.

Fireworks are meant to be enjoyed, but you'll enjoy them much more knowing your family is safe. Take extra precautions this Fourth of July and your holiday will be a blast!

Reviewed by: [Steven Dowshen, MD](#)

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