

WVU Eye Institute raises awareness on preventing eye injuries

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MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — Eye professionals say that eye injuries are more common than many people believe, and the WVU Eye Institute is hoping to raise awareness of ways that West Virginians can protect themselves.

Dr. Geoffrey Bradford, pediatric ophthalmologist, said that while his patients are often aware that eye injuries can and do occur, they may often feel like it won't happen to them.

However, adults and children with preventable eye injuries are seen every day in our emergency departments, and Bradford said it's always best to be safe and prepared before an injury occurs.

"Don't minimize the potential risk to you when you're doing something that's risky to the eyes," he said. "If you're mowing the grass or weed whacking or in your workshop, safety glasses help prevent things from striking your eye at a high velocity. Don't take it for granted that it's not going to happen to you."

He added he also often sees sports-related eye injuries, especially in games like basketball and baseball.

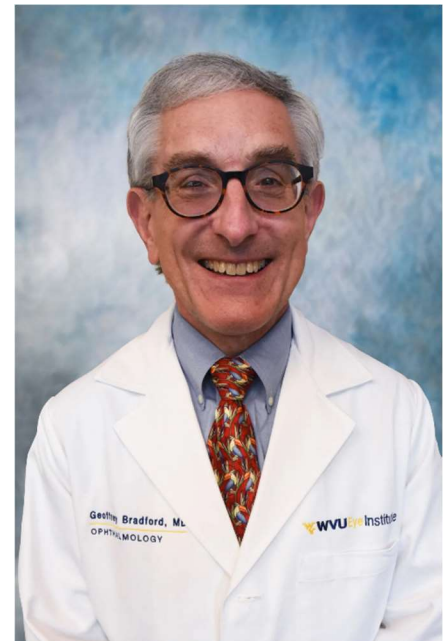
Additionally, Bradford said, WVU Medicine sees an influx of eye injuries every summer because adults and children alike often handle fireworks improperly. He highly recommends leaving firework displays to the professionals. Even sparklers are dangerous in the hands of young children, burning at 3,000 degrees, which can easily burn hands and faces.

"If you're outside on a sunny day, wear sunglasses," he said. "It's important for reducing ultraviolet light exposure to the eyes, which is a contributor to early onset of cataracts and even retinal degeneration."

Eye infections also frequently occur when people — especially children — rub their eyes while their hands are dirty. Bradford encouraged people to keep their hands away from their face, wash them regularly, and recognize the risks of infection to mitigate the issue.

He added that awareness should begin as early as possible, and parents should teach their children good habits of hand washing, wearing protective eye goggles for sports, and how to avoid eye injuries can go on to benefit them their entire lives.

"Tell them the risk of injury if they're mowing the lawn or throwing stones or sticks out in the yard," Bradford said. "Tell them a BB gun is not a toy and that people like me treat severe BB injuries to the eyes regularly. Parents can help their kids learn to be safe with sharp objects like pencils, forks, knives, or scissors. Those can be really serious injuries simply because a child was running or tripped and fell."



Dr. Geoffrey Bradford

Bradford noted that even the fingernails of infants can cause corneal abrasions, and trimming babies' nails regularly helps.

While there are numerous ways people can protect themselves and their children from eye injuries, Bradford said that WVU Medicine employs teams of highly skilled eye professionals who can expertly treat any patient who comes their way.

"People with an eye injury should go to WVU Medicine Urgent Care or WVU Medicine Children's Hospital because they're the only places that have ophthalmologists immediately available 24/7," he said. "It's not just that we have the experience and training. We also have all the specialized eye equipment and medications that would ever be needed to treat any eye injury."