

Blue Cross® VIRTUAL WELL-BEING

Workplace eye safety

Workplace eye injuries are very common, but many are avoidable. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health reports that about 2,000 U.S. workers sustain job-related eye injuries that require medical treatment every day. However, safety experts believe the correct eye protection can lessen the severity and even prevent 90% of these eye injuries.

At work, the more common eye injuries are from:

- Flying objects (bits of metal, glass)
- Tools
- Particles
- Chemicals
- Harmful radiation
- Digital eye strain

The American Academy of Ophthalmology suggests that if you notice any of the following signs, get medical help immediately:

- The person has obvious pain or trouble seeing.
- The person has a cut or torn eyelid.
- One eye doesn't move as well as the other.
- One eye sticks out compared to the other.
- The eye has an unusual pupil size or shape.
- There is blood in the clear part of the eye.
- The person has something in the eye or under the eyelid that can't be easily removed.



Because many eye injuries happen at work, here's a plan to help you reduce or eliminate on-the-job eye injuries:

- Assess the hazards to your employees' eyes and create an eye safety program.
- Test your employees for uncorrected vision problems by providing vision testing during your employee physical exams.
- Protect employees' eyes by selecting protective eyewear that meets OSHA regulations and is designed for your company's specific work issues. Make wearing safety eyewear mandatory.
- Fit your workers with eyewear that's comfortable and fits well by having their safety eyewear fitted by someone trained to do fittings. You may want to offer repairs onsite so your workers have easy access when they need it.
- Plan for emergencies. Set up first aid stations with procedures for eye injuries. If you use chemicals at your job, have eyewash stations easily accessible.
- Educate your workers on the importance of protective eyewear and basic first aid for eye injuries.
- Get support from management for a successful eye safety program. If you're a leader, wear your protective gear whenever it's needed.

Using correct eyewear can help prevent fractured eye sockets, scratched corneas, inflamed irises, swollen retinas, traumatic cataracts and more.

Sources: preventblindness.org*, aao.org*, osha.gov*, health.harvard.edu*, cdc.gov*

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