

# Safeguard Your Eyes

No one wants to become another eye injury statistic. Yet as one of the most exposed parts of the body, your eyes are extremely vulnerable to injury, which can result in pain, discomfort, partial vision loss, and even blindness.

It's estimated that more than a third of eye injuries occur at work, and account for nearly 10 per cent of all lost-time injuries in Australian workplaces. They are highest in the construction and manufacturing industries, and are often associated with particular types of tools and tasks, most notably grinders and welders.

Potential eye hazards can be broadly classified into three areas: projectiles, chemicals, and radiation.

- **Projectiles** can be of almost any size or shape, and can travel at either high or low velocity. Common projectiles include pieces of a screwdriver blade, drill bits, grinding wheels, metal debris, or rock. Even tiny dust particles can cause injury to the eye's cornea.

- **Hazardous chemicals** such as acids, alkalis, and organic solvents pose a risk largely by splashing into the eye, although fumes, vapours, and dry chemicals can also cause eye injuries.

- **Types of radiation** most commonly encountered in industry are infrared radiation (IR) or heat, ultraviolet radiation (UV), and visible light. Sources of IR are primarily molten materials, in particular glass and metals.

UV radiation is produced by both the sun and artificial sources, with the most common industrial source being an electric welding arc, which emits large amounts of UV radiation, as well as IR.

If your work involves contact with any of these hazards, it's vital that you know how to adequately protect your eyes. A large number of industrial eye injuries occur because the eye protection was not worn, or was inappropriate for the job.

Ensure your eye protection is:

- 1. Appropriate for the task.** Safety glasses that offer impact resistance against projectiles for instance, may be ineffective against chemicals, which may need tight-fitting goggles or face shields.
- 2. Good quality.** Certain materials, such as polycarbonate, provide a high degree of protection. You must never rely on your own prescription glasses to guard against projectiles or chemicals – your glasses can be worn under certain safety glasses, or you can use prescription goggles.
- 3. Fitted properly.** Poorly fitting eye protection may give little or no security, and is likely to be uncomfortable to wear. If you are fitted with adjustable eye protection, ensure you know how to make your own adjustments to the frame so that it fits you correctly and comfortably.



Main sources: American Optometric Association at [aoa.org](http://aoa.org); National Injury Surveillance Unit, at [nisu.flinders.edu.au](http://nisu.flinders.edu.au); and National Safety Magazine.

Remember to close the photocopier lid. Looking at the bright light can hurt your eyes if you do it enough times, and can be linked to macular degeneration.

New York Eye and Ear Infirmary.

## St John First Aid: Foreign Object in Eye

Loose eyelashes, grit, dust, glass, cosmetics, metal particles, and insects are some of the foreign objects that may enter the eye.

First warn the casualty of the importance of NOT rubbing the eye, even if the desire to do so is very strong. Rubbing may damage the cornea or other parts of the eye.

DO NOT remove any foreign object from the cornea of the eye, that is embedded in or protruding from the eye, and/or persist in examining the eye if the injury is severe.

To manage a foreign object in the eye:

- 1. Support the casualty's head:**
  - keep the casualty's head as still as possible; and
  - ask the casualty to try and not move their eyes.
- 2. Flush the eye with cool, flowing water:**
  - if the injury is a chemical or heat burn, or if there is smoke in the eyes, flush with water for at least 20 minutes.
- 3. Place a dressing over the eye:**
  - place a sterile pad or dressing over the injured eye;
  - ask the casualty to hold it in place; and
  - bandage the dressing in place, covering the injured eye.
  - If there is a penetrating eye injury, lie casualty on his/her back, place pad around object and bandage in place.
- 4. Call 000 for an ambulance if the injury is serious.**



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## NATIONAL SUNNIES FOR SIGHT DAY

Held on Friday 29th February, National Sunnies for Sight Day is a fundraising event held by the International Centre for Eyecare Education. Schools and preschools are encouraged to register online and make a donation, and in return students and teachers can wear their sunnies for the day. The money raised will be used to support blindness prevention projects in areas including Sri Lanka, East Timor, Malawi and Indigenous Australia. For further information, visit [sunniesforsight.org](http://sunniesforsight.org).

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