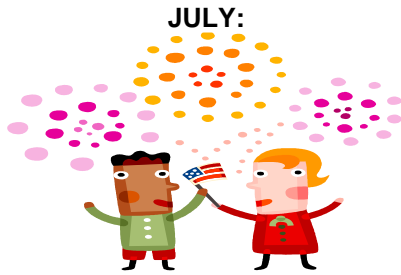


HEALTH NOTES

by Marla Lichtsinn, RN, MPA, CIC, FCN, Parish Nurse
marla.lichtsinn@psd-lcms.org



Fireworks Safety: “Not child’s play!”

Prevent Blindness America warns that there is no safe way for nonprofessionals to use fireworks: according to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), fireworks were involved in an estimated 10,800 injuries treated in US hospital emergency rooms in just the year of 2005. Most – 6,500 – of these occurred during the one month period surrounding the Fourth of July. In comparison, there were 9,300 fireworks related injuries treated in US ERs in 2003; and 9,600 in 2004. These numbers demonstrate a statistically significant upward trend in fireworks injuries since 1996.

Of the 6,500 injuries occurring from June 18 to July 18, 2005, the following data was reported:

- More than twice as many males were injured as females
- Injuries to children were a major component of the total number of fireworks-related injuries, with children under age 15 accounting for 2,900 (45%) of the injuries
- Among the different types of fireworks, fire-crackers were associated with the greatest number of injuries (26%), followed by rockets (17%) and yes, even sparklers (17%)
- Sparklers accounted for almost half the injuries to children less than 5 years of age, but they’re not the only ones – in a one-month period, sparklers injured 200 people in the 25-44 year age range, and another 100 people over 45 years of age... sparklers burn at – get this! – 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit!!
- The parts of the body most often injured were hands (estimated 2,000 injuries), eyes (1,600 injuries), and head/face/ear (1,300 injuries)
- According to the US Eye Injury Registry, bottle rockets are the most frequent cause of serious eye injury requiring hospitalization; innocent bystanders are also at risk when rockets are used: rockets are unpredictable, and their flight path is erratic – they often stray off course or throw shrapnel when they explode.
- According to the National Fire Protection Association, in any single year, fireworks will cause thousands of fires and millions of dollars in direct property damage. In 2003, an estimated 2,300 reported structure or vehicle fires were started by fireworks. These fires resulted in 5 civilian deaths, 60 civilian injuries, and

\$29 million in direct property damage. In 2003, fires started by fireworks caused \$58 million in direct property damage to structures.

- A study of 53 serious fireworks-related eye injuries reported from the Eye Injury Registry of Alabama revealed surgical intervention was required in over 56% of the cases; bottle rockets were responsible for all surgeries in which the injured eye had to be removed; permanent residual vision loss occurred in all but four of the 53 cases.

Fireworks and celebrations go together, especially during the Fourth of July festivities, but there are precautions that parents can take to prevent these injuries. The best defense against kids suffering severe eye injuries and burns is simply this – don’t let kids play with any fireworks! Do not purchase, use or store fireworks of any type. Protect yourself, your family and friends by avoiding any fireworks display that is not done by pyrotechnic professionals. Attend only authorized public fireworks displays conducted by licensed operators.

If an accident does occur, what can you do right away to minimize the damage?

For eye injuries...

- Do not rub the eye – rubbing may increase bleeding or make the injury worse
- Do not attempt to rinse out the eye – this can be even more damaging than rubbing!
- Do not apply pressure to the eye itself – holding or taping a foam cup or the bottom of a juice carton over the eye will protect it from further contact, including the child’s hand
- Do not apply ointment – it may not be sterile, and it makes the area around the eye slippery and more difficult for the doctor to examine.
- Do not stop for medicine! – over-the-counter pain relievers will do little to relieve the pain, and the time lost in a stop at the store will be more costly than the price of the medicine – GO DIRECTLY TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM!

For injury to skin (e.g., face, hands and/or arms)....

- Cooling the skin with cold water is good for reducing the injury and relieving pain, but don’t put ice directly on the wound, and don’t try to remove any blistered skin
- Do not apply ointment of any kind – cover the wound with sterile (or the cleanest available) dressings or materials, and...
- GO DIRECTLY TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM!



For more information, go to
<http://preventblindness.org/safety/fireworksafety.html>
and

www.redcross-pdx.org/news/guidelines_for_first_aid
For a free copy of preventblindness’ “Safe Summer Celebrations” brochure, call 1-800-331-2020

PERMISSION GRANTED TO REPRINT!