

Fireworks Safety: 9 Tips From ER Doctors

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On the Fourth of July, people across the country will head outside to fire up the grill, cool off in the pool and have a delicious potluck picnic. And what better way to end a long, relaxing day in the sun than lighting up the sky with red, white and blue fireworks?

But with those spectacular displays come some real dangers. It's extremely important to have a safety plan with fireworks of all sizes, as an unexpected injury could mean a visit to [your local emergency department](#).

Many emergency doctors enjoy brilliant fireworks displays every bit as much as you do — they just want to be sure you understand what's at stake, and how to stay safe, so you can best protect your family. As the holiday approaches and you make plans for your celebration, keep your family safe with a few reminders from our emergency physicians.

Fireworks Are Fantastic, but Can Be Dangerous

While fireworks are a mainstay of Independence Day celebrations, they're also a leading cause of emergency room visits. [Emergency rooms](#) treat thousands of people for fireworks-related injuries each year, including burns on the hands, fingers, head, face, legs and eyes. These burns can range from mild to severe and can sometimes be life-threatening.

Protect Your Family: 9 Tips to Play It Safe With Fireworks

The best way to avoid any chance of injury from fireworks is to not handle them yourself.

However, this year, many fireworks displays put on by the city or other professional organizations in your neighborhood may be canceled for everyone's safety from COVID-19.

If you plan to set off your own fireworks at home, Dr. Bennett suggests following these important safety tips to avoid injuries.

1. Use Legal Fireworks

There's a reason many fireworks are illegal for personal use: They're simply too dangerous. Heed all labels and warnings carefully, for your safety and that of your loved ones. And when in doubt, don't purchase them.

2. Choose an Open Spot

Never light fireworks indoors or near a house or car. Find a flat, concrete surface away from dry grass, leaves or other flammable items.

3. Watch Children Closely

Children are curious. Help demystify fireworks by explaining how they work and why they can be dangerous. Review safety rules beforehand to be sure they know to stay far away from all fireworks, even after they've gone off. And of course, keep a close watch during your display.

4. Consider Alternatives for Kids

Swap out flaming-hot sparklers with glow sticks for young children. Sparklers are one of the leading causes of injuries to children during many Fourth of July festivities.

5. Dress Appropriately

To avoid the chance of your clothing catching a spark, wear fitted, non-flammable clothing. Loose or flowing garments can be a recipe for disaster.

6. Follow the Directions on the Box

Manufacturers are required to follow stringent guidelines for labeling their products. Read the instructions on each fireworks package carefully and light them one at a time.

7. Have a Bucket of Water on Hand

Having a bucket of water handy allows you to douse fireworks quickly and properly dispose of them.

8. Keep Your Distance

Stand several feet away once your fireworks are lit and resist the urge to check on anything that doesn't ignite right away. This is the most common way people get head and face injuries from fireworks. You should also aim the fireworks away from your audience and any homes or cars nearby.

9. Plan for Safety

Have a fire extinguisher and first aid kit on hand and ready for use. Hopefully, you won't have to use either one, but it's important to be prepared for the unexpected.

Make Sure Your Celebration Goes Off With a Bang

When you take these steps, you and your family can enjoy fireworks safely, on the Fourth of July and well beyond. Have a plan for safety before, during and after you light your fireworks, and be sure to make a plan for injuries, too.

Our emergency doctors are here to provide immediate care for injuries of all kinds, including from fireworks. As part of your plan to stay safe, identify [your nearest ER](#) now. If someone in your group is injured during an at-home fireworks display, call 911 immediately.

Follow the operator's instructions for treating the injury until you're able to get to [an AdventHealth emergency room](#) near you where your loved one can get the care they need.

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