



## Five Tips to Keep Your Summer Safe and Injury Free

A backyard fireworks display may look pretty and get family and friends excited, but when it comes to lighting fireworks, leave it to the professionals, Mayo Clinic physicians are advising. Each year, Mayo Clinic doctors see dozens of patients who have lost fingers and limbs, gotten severe burns, and suffered hearing loss as a direct result of using fireworks. Even seemingly harmless fireworks — such as sparklers — can cause severe burns and even blindness.

"People have a false sense of security when it comes to fireworks," says Donald Jenkins, M.D., a trauma physician at Mayo Clinic. "The reality is that often people are not a safe distance from exploding fireworks, or even worse, the firework actually ignites in their hand. These scenarios can lead to facial burns, eye injuries, and amputation of fingers or the hand, especially among children."

Along with avoiding fireworks, here are some more tips for keeping your summer safe and injury free:

- **Consume alcohol in moderation.** Consuming too much alcohol can lead to questionable decision-making, slowed reflexes, and false confidence – traits that are dangerous in nearly any outdoor activity during the summer months.
- **Never assume a camp or bonfire is completely out.** On more than one occasion, fire-happy campers have been known to dump gasoline or other extremely flammable liquids on fires that look like they are out or smoldering, and ended up with third-degree burns. Children and adults make trips to the emergency room every summer after stepping into fire pits they thought were cool.
- **Always wear a helmet when biking, motorcycling, horseback riding, or on an ATV.** This is like wearing a seat belt in a car — an absolute must. Riders of all kinds can sustain serious injuries in an accident, but survival chances grow exponentially when a helmet is worn.
- **Use extra-sharp eyes when operating a motor vehicle on the water.** Watch out for other boaters, water-skiers, and swimmers. Every year, patients end up in the ER after getting tangled up in a boat propeller. And always wear a life jacket.
- **Avoid fireworks.** Even sparklers — thought to be relatively safe — can lead to blindness and serious burns. Other larger fireworks can leave users without fingers, and even limbs. Hearing loss is common among fireworks users as well. Children must be closely supervised at all times around any kind of fireworks.

The good news is that summer injuries are nearly completely avoidable, Dr. Jenkins says. "If you go out and ride your motorcycle too fast and you're not wearing a helmet and the proper protective equipment; if you're intoxicated and climbing up a ladder; if you're not watching your child around the lawn mower, those aren't accidents," he says. "Those are injuries that were preventable."

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