First Aid for Eye Emergencies

Knowing what to do for an eye emergency can save valuable time and possibly prevent vision loss. Here are some instructions for basic eye injury first aid.

Be Prepared

- *Wear eye protection for all hazardous activities and sports at school, home and on the job that could lead to an eye injury.*

- *DO stock a first aid kit with a rigid eye shield and commercial eyewash (make sure it is not expired) before engaging in activities where an eye injury could occur.*

- *DO NOT assume that any eye injury is harmless. When in doubt, see an eye doctor promptly.*

Chemical Burns

In all cases of eye contact with chemicals:

- *Immediately flush the eye with water or any other drinkable liquid. Hold the eye under a faucet, shower or pour water into the eye using a clean container. Keep the eye open as wide as possible during flushing. Continue flushing for at least 15 minutes.*

- *If a contact lens is in the eye, begin flushing over the lens immediately. Flushing may dislodge the lens.*

- *DO NOT bandage the eye.*

- *Seek emergency medical care promptly after flushing.*

Specks in the Eye

- *DO NOT rub the eye.*

- *Try to let tears wash the speck out or use a commercial eyewash.*

- *Try lifting upper eyelid outward. Look down over the lower lid.*

- *DO NOT use tweezers or other items to try and remove the speck.*

- *If the speck doesn't wash out, see an eye doctor immediately.*

Blows to the Eye

- *Apply cold compress without pressure.*

- *Seek emergency medical care in cases of pain, blurry vision, one eye sticks out more than the other, blood inside the eye, or discoloration (black eye), which could mean internal eye damage.*

Cuts and Punctures of Eye and Eyelid

- *DO NOT wash out eye with water or any other liquid.*

- *DO NOT try to remove an object that is stuck in the eye.*

- *Cover the eye with a rigid shield or the bottom half of a paper cup without pressure. Secure the shield or cup to the brow above the eye and the cheekbone below the eye without putting pressure on the eye.*

- *Seek emergency medical care immediately.*