

PoisonPreventionPress

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Eye Exposures in Maryland

In 2015, the MPC managed 1,377 calls about eye exposures across all ages. Over 75% of these occurred at home. Just under 60% were able to be managed on site. Approximately 86% of all patients had no symptoms or minor symptoms that resolved shortly after the home treatment.

Leading cause of exposure by age:

- **Under 6 years:** laundry products
- **6-12 years:** glow sticks and hand sanitizers
- **13-19 years:** personal care products
- **Adults:** bleaches

Did you know that...

- 90% of eye exposures in children under the age of 6 years reported to the MPC resulted in no symptoms or minor symptoms?
- 10% of eye exposures reported to the MPC were work-related?



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Eye Exposures in Young Children

A recent study¹ looked at chemical eye burns treated in emergency rooms from 2010-2013. It showed that children ages 1-2 years old were most often injured. The most common cause of injury was household products such as oven cleaners, drain cleaners, chlorine bleach and ammonia products. Most of these injuries occurred in the home. The study also showed most children came from low-income families.

In 2015, poison centers across the United States managed over 31,000 cases involving eye exposures in children under the age of 6 years old. Approximately 95% of these cases occurred in the home. The top five substances involved in these exposures were:

1. Bleaches (liquid and dry)
2. Single use liquid laundry detergents (pods or packets)
3. Glow sticks, glow jewelry, etc.
4. Perfumes, colognes and aftershaves
5. All-purpose alkaline cleaning agents

The medical outcomes in the poison center managed cases were generally good. Most had no effect or minor effect like burning or redness. Only 3.5% had more severe symptoms like scratches or burns on the eye.

These data emphasize the importance of safe use and proper storage of household products. Follow these tips to help keep children safe from eye exposures:

- Store all cleaning products up and away and out of reach of children
- Store all personal care products (for example: perfume) up and away and out of reach
- Store oven cleaners, drain openers, toilet bowl cleaners and soap scum removers in locked cabinets
- Make sure spray bottles are stored with the nozzle in the locked position
- Store all laundry products up and away and out of reach of small children
- Do not let children help with the laundry by giving them the laundry packet to put in the washing machine
- Do not let children play in the laundry room

If a child gets a cleaner or other household product in their eye, begin flushing with water, not too hot and not too cold. This is best done in the shower, under the faucet or pouring from a cup. Flush for 5-10 minutes to start then call the poison center for further instructions.

With prompt flushing and a call to the poison center, often eye exposures can be managed at home. The poison specialists will be able to help determine if further medical attention is needed. Call 1-800-222-1222 to speak with a pharmacist or nurse any time, day or night.

¹ https://medlineplus.gov/news/fullstory_160258.html