



# What an ER Doctor Wants You to Know About Fireworks

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Sparkling, shimmering, colorful stars, preceded by a boom that says something worth remembering is about to happen: Fireworks are beautiful and entertaining. They are also very dangerous.

In 2022, there were more than 10,000 reported injuries due to fireworks, and 73% of them happened in the weeks around the Fourth of July, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. There were also 11 deaths.

“Fireworks can cause unexpected life-altering injuries, including devastating burns that damage skin and deeper tissues and even blast injuries causing damage to or loss of body parts, including fingers or limbs,” says [Angela Barskaya, MD](#), who has worked in hospital emergency departments on many July 4ths. “Even small fireworks like sparklers burn at extreme temperatures, risking permanent injury.”

At least once every holiday, Dr. Barskaya says, the emergency department treats a truly devastating injury to the hand, leading to finger loss.

“Everybody would rather spend their evening watching a professional fireworks show instead of being in the operating room, hoping to have their hand repaired and working again,” says Dr. Barskaya. “Prioritize safety to prevent these life-altering accidents during celebrations.”

We asked Dr. Barskaya to explain the risks of do-it-yourself (DIY) fireworks—including sparklers—and share ways to stay safe.

## Who gets hurt using fireworks?

Everyone, especially people between the ages of 25 to 44 and children under age 15.

## Which fireworks cause the most injuries?

Nationally, most fireworks injuries in hospital emergency departments are due to firecrackers and sparklers.

## What fireworks injuries are most common?

Burns. We most often see fireworks burns on hands and fingers, as well as heads, faces, ears, and eyes.

## How serious is it to get burned by a firework?

Sparklers can burn at about 2,000 degrees. That is as hot as a blowtorch and hot enough to melt certain metals. Severe burns can lead to loss of function in the hands, vision loss, and deformities. They may require surgeries and skin grafts and could put you at risk for infections.

## What do you wish everyone knew about fireworks?

Even the smallest fireworks can cause big damage. In addition to sparklers burning hot, tiny firecrackers can explode quickly in the hand before you can put them down, leading to finger loss. Just because it is small doesn't mean it is safe.

## Can you light fireworks in NYC and surrounding areas?

In New York City, all fireworks—including sparklers—are illegal to use. For surrounding areas, safety laws regarding fireworks and sparklers are extremely restrictive. Depending on where your celebration will be, it's important to check regulations for [New York State](#), [New Jersey](#), and [Connecticut](#).

### Where to See Fireworks in NYC

“Enjoy your city or town's official show,” says Dr. Barskaya, who points out that watching professional fireworks displays is a much safer way to celebrate.

Find Local Fireworks

## How to Safely Use Fireworks

If you plan to make DIY fireworks part of your celebration, remember these safety tips:

- Check local laws to see if fireworks—and which types—are legal in your area
- Buy fireworks labeled for consumer use (fireworks for commercial or professional use often come wrapped in brown paper)
- Do not let children use fireworks
- Do not stand over a firework when lighting or after it is lit. Step back quickly after lighting
- Do not point or throw fireworks at anyone
- Do not re-light a firework that did not fully light or ignite
- Do not use fireworks if you are drinking or taking drugs
- Have water or a hose nearby in case of fire
- Make sure the firework is completely out before putting it in the trash

## Topics

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