



Don't pick up and light fireworks, warns UCI Health burn expert

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Emergency room visits for serious injuries, burns rise around the Fourth of July

Orange, Calif. — Fireworks and sparklers are celebratory hallmarks, especially at this time of year. Yet readily available recreational fireworks are not truly safe and can lead to injuries that may require a trip to the [emergency room](#).

According to the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#), more than 14,700 individuals in the U.S. were treated in the emergency room for firework injuries in 2024, a 23% increase compared to 2023.

Almost half of these injuries resulted in burns. Of those, 36% were to the hands and fingers and 22% were to the head, face and ears. Burns also accounted for 37% of ER visits.

"It's important that people of all ages refrain from picking up fireworks and sparklers from the ground and lighting them. This helps to prevent serious injury and will keep you out of the emergency room," says [Dr. Syed F. Saquib](#), a trauma and burn surgeon with UCI Health and medical director of the [UCI Health Regional Burn Center](#), the only one in Orange County.

Last summer, UCI Health — Orange, formerly known as [UCI Medical Center](#), treated 36 adults and children with injuries related to illegal fireworks. And almost half of these patients received leg injuries on the 4th of July.

Fireworks safety tips

It's important that parents and caregivers teach children about the dangers of fireworks beginning at a young age to carry them into adulthood, Saquib says. He also shared that an increasing number of injuries are due to sparklers. They can burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, hot enough to melt some metals.

In addition to reinforcing that fireworks and sparklers should never be picked up and relit, other safety tips include:

- Consider safer alternatives, such as glow sticks, confetti poppers, bubbles or color streamers
- Observe all state and local laws regarding fireworks
- Have a designated, sober adult light all fireworks
- Light one legal firework at a time and then move away quickly
- Keep a bucket close by to extinguish any lit fireworks
- Keep observers and children a safe distance away from any lit fireworks, preferably behind a protective barrier if possible
- Never allow children to pick up any pieces of previously lit fireworks
- Store fireworks out of the reach of children of all ages

Saquib says children should never handle sparklers or fireworks, whether legal or illegal. If you see an abandoned firework nearby, immediately alert an adult.

Additional things to avoid include:

- Pointing or throwing lit fireworks at another person
- Attempting to alter, modify or relite fireworks
- Holding a light firework in your hand – this can lead to severe injury
- Consuming alcohol or drugs when lighting fireworks

Saquib also stresses that adults can be held legally and financially liable for any fireworks injury.

Firework injury treatment

It's always good to have first-aid kit handy in any area where fireworks are being handled or lit.

If you are burned by a firework, first coat the injury with cool, not cold, water. This helps stop the burning process and limit skin damage, Saquib notes

Then, remove all clothing and jewelry from the injured area. Next, cover the area with a dry, clean sheet or loose bandages. Seek immediate medical attention by visiting the closest emergency room, especially if there are multiple injuries the eyes, legs, arms and trunk area.

About the UCI Health Regional Burn Center

The [UCI Health Regional Burn Center](#), located at UCI Health — Orange, is nationally recognized for its innovative care programs, robust research, successful outcomes after severe burn injury and commitment to patients recovering from such injuries. It is also accredited by the American Burn Association for both adults and pediatric patients.