Firework Safety: Leave Fireworks to the Professionals

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The new year is almost upon us. One of the staples of the annual festivities is the traditional fireworks display. During the pandemic, many families may choose to keep celebrations at home to avoid large crowds. It is important to remember though, that fireworks are extremely dangerous, and should not be a part of home celebrations. A study from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission found a 50% increase in deaths and injuries from fireworks-related incidents in 2020, compared to 2019. Thousands more required care in the emergency department. Injuries from fireworks can include burns, eye injuries, lost fingers, fractures, other traumatic injuries and even death.

So this new year, as we prepare for the festivities, focus on safety measures we can take to make sure our families can enjoy the time together without any unnecessary injuries.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that families take some basic safety precautions:

- Watch fireworks displays from a distance.
Avoid purchasing fireworks to be used in your home. Even if fireworks are legal to purchase in your community, fireworks are not safe around children or for use in the home.

Many parents do not realize that children can sustain serious injuries from sparklers. Sparklers can burn at temperatures as high as 2,000 degrees and can ignite clothing and cause third-degree burns. Use glow sticks instead.

The AAP encourages families to partake in community firework displays run by professionals instead of using fireworks in your home. If you take your kids to see a fireworks show, remember that some children can get scared because of the loud noises. Talk to your kids about what they should expect before you go to the show.

Even though we know that avoiding home fireworks is the safest choice, especially if there are young children around, here are some tips for families that choose to use fireworks at home:

- Children should always be supervised. Young children should never be allowed to light or play with works.
- Always use fireworks outside in an open area and keep a bucket of water or garden hose nearby in case of fires.
- Always point fireworks away from yourself and others. It is recommended to wear and provide eye protection for all participants.
- Don't allow kids to pick up pieces of fireworks. Some may still be ignited and can explode at any time.
- Soak all fireworks in a bucket of water before throwing them in the trash can.

Finally, if you or someone you care about does experience an injury from fireworks, be sure to go to a doctor or emergency room right away. Some tips before you get there include:
• If a particle gets into your eye, do not touch, rub, or rinse it.
• If a sharp object enters the eye, do not pull it out. Put a loose bandage over the eye, but do not apply pressure. Go to an ER immediately.
• If there is a burn, soak the burn in cool water, but do not use ice. Lightly cover the area with a sterile gauze pad or clean towel. If it is oozing, go to a doctor or ER right away.
• Do not apply any ointments, butter, grease, or take blood-thinning pain medications such as ibuprofen or aspirin.

We all want a safe and healthy 2022, so this year, engage in safe firework practices to make sure that your family's holiday is successful.

For more information regarding firework safety for children, visit healthychildren.org or call the Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Miami, a program supported by The Children’s Trust, at 305-243-9080 or visit www.injuryfree.org.

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