

A cork in the eye is no way to spend the holiday

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For many, the countdown on New Year's Eve is a time to celebrate with friends and family and pop open a bottle of bubbly, but for others, it could mean getting hit in the eye with a champagne cork that could lead to a trip to the emergency room and even permanent vision loss.

“[Champagne](#) cork [eye](#) injuries can have a devastating impact on your vision,” said Kuldev Singh, M.D., M.P.H., clinical correspondent for the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Professor of Ophthalmology, Stanford University School of Medicine. “Eye-related cork injuries can lead to acute glaucoma, detached retina and staining of the cornea, all of which can result in decreased vision. Many champagne cork-related eye injuries necessitate urgent surgery to prevent significant, permanent vision loss -- a terrible way to spend the holidays.”

A cork can fly up to 50 miles per hour as it leaves the bottle. “Incorrect popping of champagne corks is one of the most common holiday-related eye hazards. Anything that travels with such force can have a dangerous effect if it strikes your eye,” said Dr. Singh.

Every year, warm bottles of champagne, coupled with bad cork-removal techniques are responsible for causing serious, potentially blinding injuries. “If you follow a few simple steps to properly open a bottle of champagne, you can keep your holidays enjoyable and safe,” says Dr. Singh.

Here are some tips on opening a bottle of champagne properly:

- * Make sure sparkling wine is chilled to at least 45 degrees Fahrenheit before opening. The cork of a warm bottle is more likely to pop unexpectedly.
- * Don't shake the bottle. Shaking increases the speed at which the cork leaves the bottle thereby increasing your chances of severe eye injury.
- * To open the bottle safely, hold down the cork with the palm of your hand while removing the wire hood. Point the bottle at a 45-degree angle away from yourself and from any bystanders.
- * Place a towel over the entire top of the bottle and grasp the cork.
- * Keep the bottle at a 45-degree angle as you slowly and firmly twist the bottle while holding the cork to break the seal. Continue to hold the cork while twisting the bottle. Continue until the cork is almost out of the neck. Counter the force of the cork using slight downward pressure just as the [cork](#) breaks free from the bottle.
- * Never use a corkscrew to open a [bottle](#) of champagne or sparkling wine.

More information: Watch a video showing the force of a cork breaking glass: www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/injuries/holiday.cfm

Provided by American Academy of Ophthalmology

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