

# Collapsible laundry hampers may pose risk to kids' eyes

July 1 2013, by Dennis Thompson, Healthday Reporter

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Photo: Pediatrics

Two reports show wires can pop out, threatening vision.

(HealthDay)—Collapsible laundry hampers can cause serious eye injuries to children if a sharp wire contained within the device breaks free, according to a new report.

The researchers documented the cases of two children, one 23 months old and the other 11 years old, who each suffered a puncture wound in one eye from a collapsible laundry hamper.

The devices collapse and then pop back into shape because they have embedded within them a flexible wire that winds around the outside of the cloth hamper.

"The wire has fabric holding it in place, and it's like a humongous spring," said study co-author Dr. Iris Kassem, an assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology at the University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Medicine. "When the fabric becomes frayed, the wire pops out and the end of the wire is very sharp."

The 11-year-old boy suffered a corneal laceration while placing clothes in a collapsible laundry hamper, according to the report. The wire mechanism within the hamper suddenly snapped up and struck his right eye, puncturing it.

The report said the 23-month-old girl received her injury after being poked in the eye from a wire protruding from a collapsible hamper.

Both patients came to the University of Illinois at Chicago Eye and Ear Infirmary for treatment within one year of each other.

The cases were detailed online July 1 and in the August print issue of the journal *Pediatrics*.

These types of penetrating [eye injuries](#) are uncommon but very serious, said Dr. Alon Kahana, an oculoplastic surgeon at the University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center.

"The risk of vision [loss] is acute, and those patients require immediate evaluation in an emergency room," Kahana said. "Outcomes can be very good. There are some patients that end up with 20/20 vision, [but] there are some patients who end up with no vision at all."

In both reported cases, the children received prompt [emergency treatment](#) and, as a result, are expected to regain much of the sight in their injured eyes, Kassem said.

Both children required eye surgery to repair the damage. They have since required some vision therapy to fix developmental problems that occurred as a result of temporarily losing sight in one eye at such a young age. The boy has suffered from exotropia, a form of crossed eyes, while the girl has had amblyopia, or lazy [eye](#).

"They both did extremely well," Kassem said. "They both got very lucky. They both beat the odds to do well."

The authors have reported the injuries to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Kassem said.

They urged parents to be aware of the risk to kids. "Children shouldn't be playing around these things, and if the integrity of the hamper is compromised in any way, you need to throw the product away," Kassem said.

Kahana agreed. "When it pokes out, it pokes out with force. You have the combination of sharp and force," she said. "Most of these are cheap items not meant for extended use. People should see when something approaches the end of its useful life and toss it away."

Kassem has two kids and, at the time of the injuries, had a couple of these hampers around her house.

"When the second kid came in with an injury, I said, 'That's enough of that,' and got rid of the hampers," she said. "It kind of freaked me out."

**More information:** For more on laundry safety, check out this Consumer Reports piece on the hazards of [detergent pods](#).

Citation: Collapsible laundry hampers may pose risk to kids' eyes (2013, July 1) retrieved 24 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-07-collapsible-laundry-hampers-pose-kids.html>

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