

Falls and brawls top list of causes for eye injuries in US

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Falling is the No. 1 cause of eye injuries. Credit: American Academy of Ophthalmology

Falling and fighting top the list of major causes of eye injuries resulting in hospitalization over a 10-year period, according to research presented

today at AAO 2015, the 119th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Falling was the No. 1 cause of eye injuries overall and accounted for more than 8,425 hospitalizations. Researchers also found that the cost to treat eye injuries at hospitals rose by 62 percent during that period and now exceeds \$20,000 per injury.

Serious ocular [trauma injuries](#) include orbital fractures and being pierced by objects. These injuries can be expensive to treat, and in many cases are preventable. With that in mind, researchers at Johns Hopkins University decided to identify the most common causes of eye injuries as well as the associated hospital costs so that prevention efforts could be better targeted. Such interventions could perhaps lower [eye injury](#) rates and overall [health care costs](#) for eye trauma inpatient visits.

They identified a sample of nearly 47,000 patients ages 0 to 80 diagnosed with ocular trauma from 2002 to 2011 using a [national health care](#) database. They examined the total cost of hospitalization, cause of injury, type of injury and length of hospital stay. The researchers then grouped injured people by age. Their findings include:

- Falls are the leading cause of eye injury: Most of the 8,425 falls recorded happened to those 60 and older. Among the types of falls, slipping caused nearly 3,000 eye injuries. Falling down stairs was cited as a cause of eye injury 900 times.
- Fighting was second most common cause of ocular trauma: In total, nearly 8,000 hospitalizations for eye injuries were caused by fighting and various types of assault. "Unarmed fight or brawl" came in at No. 2 overall among specific causes of eye injuries requiring hospitalization, but was the top cause reported for ages 10 to 59.
- Kids injured in accidents, vehicle collisions and by sharp objects: For children ages 10 and under, the leading cause of eye injury was being struck by accident by a person or object. Car crashes

and accidentally being pierced or cut by a sharp object (such as scissors) were second and third on the list of causes.

- The median cost of treating these eye injuries shot up from \$12,430 to \$20,116 between the years 2002 to 2011, an increase of 62 percent. The researchers found costs to be higher at large hospitals and for older patients. Income did not correlate with costs. However, the Johns Hopkins team says that other factors not included in the study could play a role, too.

"While we have some clues, we still can't be certain why it's more expensive to get treated for an eye injury now than before," said Christina Prescott, M.D., Ph.D., the study's lead researcher and an ophthalmology professor at the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins University. "It could be related to drug prices or administrative costs. Either way, it's clear we need more targeted interventions to help reduce these types of injuries, many of which are preventable."

Provided by American Academy of Ophthalmology

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