

Lasers in toys can cause serious eye damage, FDA warns

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Although sold as playthings, they emit powerful beams.

(HealthDay)—Lasers in toys can be dangerous to children and those around them, posing the risk of serious eye injuries and even blindness, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

"A beam shone directly into a person's eye can injure it in an instant, especially if the laser is a powerful one," Dan Hewett, health promotion officer at the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health, said in an agency news release.

Laser injuries to eyes usually don't hurt, but vision can deteriorate slowly over time. These injuries may go unnoticed for days and even weeks, and could be permanent, Hewett said.

Examples of laser toys include:

- Lasers mounted on toy guns that can be used for aiming
- Spinning tops that project [laser beams](#) while they spin
- Hand-held lasers used during play as lightsabers
- Lasers intended for entertainment that create optical effects in an open room

The FDA is particularly interested in toys with lasers because it's often children who are hurt by these products. Advertisers promote them as playthings, so parents and kids believe they're safe to use, Hewett said.

In recent years, the power of lasers has increased while prices have fallen, he added.

The FDA offers the following safety tips:

- Never aim or shine a laser directly at any person or animal. The [light energy](#) from a laser aimed into the eye can be dangerous, possibly even more than staring directly into the sun.
- Do not aim a laser at any [reflective surface](#).
- Keep in mind that the startling effect of a bright [beam of light](#) can cause serious accidents when aimed at a driver in a car or lead to injuries among people doing other activities, such as playing sports.
- Look for labeling that a laser complies with 21 CFR (the Code of Federal Regulations), Subchapter J. "If you buy a laser toy or pointer and you don't see this information on the labeling, it's best not to make any assumptions about its safety," Hewett said.

More information: The Nemours Foundation outlines how to [choose safe toys](#).

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