

# Safety Fact Sheet

## Laser pointers

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### What is a laser pointer?

A Laser pointer is a small hand held tool that produces a thin beam of light which appears as a small dot on a surface. Battery-operated laser pointers were developed originally as aids in conferences and lectures.<sup>1</sup>

### How may a child be injured?

#### Eye injury

- Children may experience temporary blindness (flash-blindness), glare, afterimage, disorientation and ulceration of the eye if the beam of a laser pointer is directed toward their eye. This may also result in permanent eye damage.

### How common are these injuries?

While it is known that children and adults have sustained permanent eye damage as a result of the inappropriate use of laser pointers, there are no recent published statistics available.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Is there a Law or an Australian Standard for laser pointers?

The law in NSW (Fair Trading Regulation 2007) restricts the supply of certain laser pointers that can cause serious eye injury. A supplier must be able to produce a test certificate for all laser pointers they sell.

The law in NSW prohibits laser pointers designed to depict or resemble a gun whether or not the depiction or resemblance is realistic or in the nature of a toy or novelty. The law also prohibits toy or novelty guns to which a laser pointer is attached or of which it is a component.

### Remember:

*The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that you do not allow your child to use laser pointers.*

If you decide to let your child use a laser pointer, please consider the safety advice below:

- Ensure that laser pointers are used only under adult supervision.
- Make sure children never look directly into the beam of a laser.
- Make sure children never view a laser pointer using an optical instrument, such as binoculars or a microscope.
- No one should point a laser beam at another person.
- No one should point a laser beam at a moving vehicle or aircraft..
- Make sure no one points a laser beam at a reflective surface, such as a mirror or other shiny surface.
- Do not use laser pointers that have been detected as being unsafe ([http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/Businesses/Product\\_safety/General\\_products/Laser\\_pointers.html](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/Businesses/Product_safety/General_products/Laser_pointers.html))
- Do not purchase or use a laser pointer that has an emission level greater than one milliwatt (mW).<sup>4</sup> Be careful of products purchased from overseas which may emit much higher levels.

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- Remove the batteries of laser pointers when not in use to avoid unsupervised use by children.
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that you check for products that have been recalled ([www.recalls.gov.au](http://www.recalls.gov.au)) prior to buying or borrowing an item for use with your child.

<sup>1</sup> Consumer Affairs Victoria, 2003, "Laser pointers" [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)

<sup>2</sup> Monash University, 2004, <http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/ohse/assets/docs/information-sheets/lasers.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Sethi, C., Grey, R., Hart, C. "Laser pointers revisited: a survey of 14 patients attending casualty at the Bristol Eye Hospital", *British Journal of Ophthalmology*, 1999;83:1164-1167.

<sup>4</sup> Monash University, 2004, <http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/ohse/assets/docs/information-sheets/lasers.pdf>