

Why Are Your Eyes Burning After An Airbag Went Off In A Georgia Car Accident?

Can Airbag Powder In Your Eyes Cause Chemical Burns And Blurry Vision Days Later?

When an airbag deploys in a Georgia crash, it's supposed to save your life in a split second. But for some people, that same deployment leaves a different kind of injury behind, burning eyes, tearing, gritty pain, light sensitivity, and blurry vision that doesn't show up until hours or even a day or two later. An [Atlanta car accident lawyer](#) sees these cases because insurers and manufacturers often treat "airbag eye injuries" like a minor irritation instead of a medical emergency with lasting consequences.

At the [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), our car wreck attorneys have handled serious injury cases where the "injury" wasn't just the impact. It was what the airbag left behind.

Airbags can release irritant dust that includes sodium hydroxide (lye), a caustic chemical that can [injure the eyes](#). When the eye is exposed to an alkali, the damage can keep going unless it's flushed quickly and treated the right way.

What Chemical In Airbags Can Burn Your Eyes?

Older airbag inflators commonly used sodium azide chemistry to generate nitrogen gas for rapid inflation, and irritant dust can be present after deployment, including sodium hydroxide.

That "powder" people describe isn't always harmless dust. Sodium hydroxide is a strong alkali. When it gets into the eye, it can cause an alkaline burn. [Medical literature](#) documents severe ocular alkali injuries linked to airbag deployment, including long-term corneal complications.

What Is "Airbag Eye" And Why Do Symptoms Sometimes Get Worse Later?

People use terms like "airbag eye" to describe a cluster of injuries that can happen when the bag deploys, including:

- A scratch injury to the eye surface from the nylon material and debris
- Chemical keratitis, meaning inflammation and injury to the cornea from alkaline dust exposure (including sodium hydroxide)
- Blunt-force trauma effects to the eye, depending on position and impact

The delayed onset is what catches people off guard. Right after a crash, adrenaline can mask symptoms. The eye can also look "not that bad" at first, then get worse as inflammation builds

and damaged tissue reacts over the next 24 to 48 hours. That delay is part of why insurers try to turn the early record into a denial narrative.

Warning Signs Of An Airbag-Related Eye Injury After A Crash

Eye injuries don't always come with dramatic pain in minute one. Some start as irritation and turn into real vision problems.

Here are warning signs that deserve immediate attention after airbag deployment:

- **Burning Or Stinging That Doesn't Fade:** Especially if it keeps returning after blinking or rinsing.
- **Persistent Redness And Tearing:** More than "watery eyes," and not improving over hours.
- **Gritty Or Sand-In-The-Eye Sensation:** A common complaint with corneal surface injury.
- **Light Sensitivity:** Needing to squint indoors or avoiding bright rooms.
- **Blurry Vision Or Hazy Vision:** Especially if it worsens the next day.
- **Eye Pain With Blinking:** Often tied to corneal injury.
- **Swelling Around The Eye Or Eyelids:** Can signal chemical irritation or blunt trauma.
- **Headache With Vision Changes:** Not every headache is an eye injury, but the combination matters.

If you're noticing vision changes after an airbag went off, that's not a symptom to power through. Vision problems don't belong in the "give it a week" category.

What Should You Do Right Away If Airbag Powder Got In Your Eyes?

This part matters because alkaline burns can keep damaging tissue unless the chemical is diluted and removed. That's why immediate irrigation is emphasized in medical discussions of chemical eye injuries, and delays have been associated with severe outcomes in published case reports.

Here are practical steps that fit real life after a crash:

1. **Flush The Eye Promptly:** If you can do it safely, use clean water or sterile saline and keep flushing.
2. **Don't Rub Your Eyes:** Rubbing can worsen abrasion and push particles deeper.
3. **Remove Contact Lenses If You Wear Them:** If they're stuck, don't force it.
4. **Go To Emergency Care Or Urgent Ophthalmology:** Chemical exposure plus vision symptoms needs medical evaluation.
5. **Tell The Provider "Airbag Powder" And "Possible Alkali Exposure":** Clear phrasing increases the chance the right protocol gets used.

6. **Ask That Irrigation And Eye Findings Are Documented:** This becomes part of the medical record that insurers can't rewrite later.
7. **Photograph Visible Redness Or Swelling When You Can:** Quick images can help show progression.

This isn't about being dramatic. It's about treating your eyes like tissue that can't be replaced. With alkali exposure, time is tissue.

How Do Georgia Insurance Adjusters Use Missed Early Eye Symptoms To Deny Claims?

Adjusters lean on gaps. If your first ER note focuses on neck pain and bruising, and your eye symptoms show up the next day, they'll try to claim the injury didn't come from the crash or "must be unrelated."

They often hang their denial story on phrases like:

- "No eye complaints"
- "Vision normal"
- "Patient appears well"
- "Discharged in stable condition"

That's why the medical timeline matters. When symptoms get worse 24 to 48 hours later, it can still be consistent with chemical irritation and corneal injury patterns described in ophthalmology discussions of airbag-related alkali burns.

Insurers don't need certainty to deny. They just need doubt. A missing line in a record can become their whole argument.

Can You Sue An Airbag Manufacturer For Chemical Burns Or Corneal Abrasions?

Sometimes, yes. But it depends on what caused the injury and what the evidence shows.

Airbag injury cases can involve more than one responsible party:

- The at-fault driver whose negligence caused the crash that triggered deployment
- A manufacturer or supplier if the airbag system had a defect that contributed to the injury, such as a rupture or abnormal release of materials

There's also a known history of defective inflators in the marketplace, including [Takata](#) inflators that could rupture and propel metal fragments, leading to widespread recalls and government investigation.

Not every airbag eye injury is a “defect case.” Some are chemical exposure cases tied to normal deployment byproducts. Others may raise defect questions if the airbag tore, the inflator ruptured, or debris and chemicals escaped in an abnormal way.

Liability often turns on whether the injury was foreseeable, preventable, and supported by proof.

What Evidence Matters Most In An Airbag Eye Injury Claim?

These cases move on documentation. The eye injury can get worse, improve, or stabilize over time, and insurers love to exploit uncertainty.

Here are the evidence anchors that tend to carry weight:

- **Ophthalmology Records And Findings:** Slit-lamp exams, corneal staining, diagnoses like chemical keratitis or corneal abrasion, and follow-up notes.
- **Clear Symptom Timeline:** When burning, tearing, light sensitivity, and blurry vision started and how they progressed.
- **Proof Of Airbag Deployment:** Photos of the deployed bag, vehicle damage, and crash documentation.
- **Preserved Materials When Possible:** Clothes or items with visible residue, stored safely.
- **Consistency Across Visits:** Repeated reporting of the same symptoms over time.
- **Recall And Component History When Relevant:** If an inflator defect is suspected, vehicle and component identification can matter.

A claim gets stronger when the record tells one consistent story from multiple angles. When the facts repeat themselves, denial narratives get weaker.

How Long Do You Have To File An Airbag Injury Lawsuit In Georgia?

Georgia’s general statute of limitations for personal injury claims is two years from when the right of action accrues, which is often the date of injury.

That timing matters in eye injury cases because vision problems can take time to stabilize. People sometimes wait, hoping it’ll resolve, or waiting for the “final” treatment plan, and that delay can collide with the legal deadline. The injury may evolve, but the deadline doesn’t.

How Does Gary Martin Hays Handle Airbag Chemical Burn And Eye Injury Claims?

At the Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C., we know how insurance companies attack injuries that don’t look dramatic on day one. Eye injuries after airbag deployment often become battles over timelines, documentation, and whether the other side can pretend the symptoms were “delayed” in a way that means “unrelated.”

We focus on building the record early, locking down the medical timeline, and identifying every party that may be responsible, whether that's the driver who caused the crash or a manufacturer when a defect is in play.

If an airbag deployment left you with burning eyes, blurry vision, or signs of chemical exposure after a Georgia wreck, [contact the Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C. today](#) for a free consultation.