

Keeping children safe at home: Burns & Scalds

Protect your child from burns and scalds

Children often suffer burns and scalds in their homes. Young children are at greater risk from burn injuries and death because their skin is thinner than adult skin. Children's skin can suffer serious deep burns more quickly. Even after 15 minutes, a cup of tea can still be hot enough to scald a child seriously.

Severe burn injuries cause a lot of pain, require many hospitalisations and lengthy treatment. They can even result in permanent disability and disfigurement. Burns and scalds are the thirteenth leading cause of death for children in the WHO European Region, but the fifth leading one in the European Union.

Statistics show that at least half of all burn accidents can be prevented. You can protect your child from burns and scalds by making some simple changes in your home.

Keeping your child safe

Preventing burns

- Install smoke detectors in your home. Test them monthly. Change your smoke detector's batteries at least once every year.
- Teach your family a plan for escaping your home in the event of a fire and practice it regularly.
- Teach your child your local emergency services telephone number to call for help.
- Don't dry or air clothes over or near: the fire, the cooker or the heater.
- Do not smoke in bed.
- Choose child resistant cigarette lighters.
- Keep electrical outlets covered when not in use.
- Do not leave children alone around open flames, especially candles.
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Keep things that easily catch fire, such as paper, away from heat sources like cookers, heaters and fireplaces.
- Keep portable heaters and candles away from furniture and curtains. Position them safely where they cannot be knocked over. Place a screen in front of fireplaces, radiators, and electric heaters.

- Do not place portable halogen lamps in children's bedrooms or near flammable materials such as curtains.
- Choose flame retardant fabrics for children's clothing, sleepwear and home furnishings.
- Keep children well away from bonfires and barbeques.
- Children should never handle fireworks. Only adults should deal with firework displays and the lighting of fireworks.
- Always closely supervise children using sparklers. Show older children how to hold sparklers away from their body and at arm's length. Give children gloves to wear when holding sparklers.
- Never give sparklers to children under five years old.
- Keep your child out of the sun for long periods of time, especially during the hottest periods of the day. Ensure your child wears a sun hat and sun protection cream.

Preventing scalds

- Lower the temperature of your home's water. Set your water heater to 50°C. If you cannot change your home's water temperature, install thermostatic mixing valves.
- Teach your child to turn on the cold water first and then turn on the hot water slowly. Turn off the hot water first.
- Keep hot objects, foods and liquids away from table edges and counter edges. Never carry children and hot foods or liquids at the same time.
- Before bathing children in heated water, always run your open hand or forearm through the water or use a bath thermometer to check its temperature.
- In the kitchen:
 - Use the rear burners of the cooker when cooking. Turn pot handles in toward the middle of the cooker.
 - Avoid using tablecloths on kitchen tables.
 - Ensure the wires on electric kettles do not hang over the edge of the counter.



TIPS



What to do in an emergency

- Reduce the heat of a burnt or scalded area by immersing in cold water or by holding it under the cold running tap for at least 10 minutes. Do not treat with lotions or creams.
- Take your child to the hospital immediately for anything more than a very small burn or scald. Cover the affected area with a clean, plastic bag or clingfilm to reduce the risk of infection.

- Take a basic first aid course for more information about how to deal with an emergency.

Adapted from "The Scottish Good Egg Guide to keeping your child safe at home" with permission from Dynamic Advertising Group

More info: <http://www.childsafetyeurope.org>

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