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## Parents warned of burns dangers this Winter

Experts at The Children's Hospital at Westmead are issuing a warning to parents and caregivers to be extra vigilant around hot surfaces this Winter to prevent scald and contact burns in children.

The Children's Hospital at Westmead's Burns Unit sees hundreds of children with new burns from hot food, drink or surfaces every year and the incidence of these burns is continuing to increase.

In the last year 12 months, 743 children presented to the Hospital with scald or contact burn requiring treatment with statistics from the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation Statewide Burn Injury Service Data Registry showing that 30% of initial first aid was inadequate.

Head of the Burns Unit, Dr John Harvey says these accidents can happen in a second and applying the correct first-aid as soon as possible is vital.

"Burns are some of the most common childhood accidents, particularly in toddlers, and the first aid approach can have a big impact of the progression of burn depth as well as the time a burn will take to heal," Dr Harvey said.

"Toddlers are the group most at risk simply because they are inquisitive and they often have easy access to hot surfaces but the majority of these accidents are preventable."

The most common types of burns are caused from children touching heaters, ovens and irons or spilling hot water, tea, coffee, oil and foods such as noodles, soups and pasta. These injuries can potentially be very serious, especially if not treated correctly.

Dr Harvey said the only proven effective first aid for burns is 20 minutes of cold running water, adding that care should be taken to cool the burn and not the whole child (which can lead to hyperthermia).

"Many adults do not know the correct first-aid procedure for burns. If a burn occurs, the first step in treatment should always be cold running water."

"Alternative measures such as ice, toothpaste and butter should not be used under any circumstances – they are not effective and in some cases, can in fact, cause more damage," he said.

### To prevent injury, it is important to:

- Restrict your child's access to the kitchen, BBQ's and hot ashes/coals while cooking.
- Place a guard around heaters and fireplaces.
- Use an appropriate oven door guard to reduce the heat to a safer temperature.
- Do not leave irons or hair straighteners unattended or in the reach of children.

### If your child is burnt, you should:

- Remove the child's clothes and jewellery immediately (be careful not to remove clothing that is stuck to the burn).
- Cool the burnt area under running tap water for a minimum of 20 minutes while keeping the child warm.
- Do not use ice, iced water or any creams or lotions on the burn – these can make it more severe.
- Seek medical advice if the burn involves the face or neck, for any burn bigger than 20c piece size or with blisters or if you have any concerns.

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