

Media release

Preventing burns and protecting kids

Thursday, 2 November 2017

Burns and scalds are a leading cause of hospitalisation in children under the age of five years. Over 700 children under the age of five years in NSW present to hospital every year with a burn injury, according to the NSW Severe Burn Injury Service. More than half of these burns occur in the home kitchen, an average of 28 burns every month. Children aged between one and two years are at significantly greater at risk.

Sue Wicks, Head of Kids Health, the Child Health Promotion Unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead said "Children are curious about everything and do not understand the consequences of investigating. Hot water, hot drinks and hot food can cause serious burn and scald injuries to children. We would like to remind families to keep hot liquids and food out of reach of young children to prevent burn and scald injuries".

Scald burn injuries are by far the most common type of burn occurring in the home kitchen, with tea, coffee, soups and noodles among the top causes. Children's skin burns deeper, quicker and at lower temperatures compared to adults.

Safety steps to help prevent hot water burns in children:

- Place hot food and drinks out of reach of young children
- Use the back stovetop burners instead of the front burners
- Turn pot handles to the back so they are out of reach of children
- Use non slip mats and coasters instead of tablecloths
- Place kettles and other electrical equipment to the back of the bench so young children can't reach them
- Use cordless kettles or secure electrical cords out of reach of children
- Use a stove guard to prevent pots from being pulled from the cooktop; these can be found wherever child safety products are sold
- Do not cook at floor level
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking and supervise children at all times

In the event that a burn does occur, correct first aid can help to reduce the severity of the burn.

- Place the burnt area under **cool running water for 20 minutes**.
- Remove clothing and jewellery from the burnt area where possible. Clothing can retain heat and jewellery can restrict blood flow if swelling occurs
- Seek medical help for any burn bigger than a 20 cent piece
- Call 000 if you are unsure

Other common causes of burns outside of the kitchen include irons, heaters, hair-straighteners, BBQ's, treadmills, radiator pipes, car exhausts and engines.

Both of Sydney's children's hospitals recommend taking precautions to avoid burns and scalds and to use the correct first aid.

The Burns Unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead is the Paediatric arm of NSW Severe Burn Injury Service and is the referral centre for all major paediatric burns in NSW.

For more information on burns prevention, visit the Kids Health website at:

<http://kidshealth.org.au/burns-prevention>

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