

MEDIA RELEASE

Preventing burns this winter

Health experts across the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network are urging parents to be extra vigilant with children to prevent burns this winter.

The NSW Severe Burn injury Service based at The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW) has so far seen 212 children presenting with burn injuries and health experts

The most common injuries were scalds and contact burns from fireplaces, heaters, backyard bonfires, hot drinks and food including soups and noodles.



Dr Monique Bertinetti, Paediatric Burns Surgeon at CHW said these injuries often start happening as the weather becomes cooler but with more families spending most of their time at home, these injuries are occurring earlier and more frequently.

"Children are naturally curious and will always try to find different ways to keep themselves entertained so it is especially important that while children are spending extended periods of time at home that they are closely supervised to prevent them touching or getting access to something they shouldn't," Dr Bertinetti said.

"Parents should try and keep hot food and drinks and hot appliances, like irons and heaters, well out of reach of young children to avoid scald and contact burns."

"With more families opting for 'in-home' camping experiences, parents should also take extra care with backyard bonfires, heaters and fireplaces and put measures in place, like heat resistant guards, to ensure children cannot accidentally touch them.

Parents are further discouraged from using steam inhalation in young children if they're unwell. Steam inhalation can cause serious burns and is not recommended for treating flu-like symptoms.

"If a burn injury does occur, providing the correct first aid can make a big difference. Burns should be run under cool running water for 20 minutes. This is the only effective first aid to treat a burn. Never use ice, iced water, cream, gel, toothpaste or butter."

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"It is important to remove any clothing, or constrictive jewellery, if possible, and to make sure the person is kept warm. If the burn is severe or you are unsure, call 000 for medical help", Dr Bertinetti said.

How you can prevent common burns in children:

- Supervise young children at all times when they are in or around the kitchen, bathroom and campfires.
- Keep hot food and drinks, kitchen and electrical appliances (kettles, irons and hair straighteners) out of reach of young children. Unplug appliances after use and store away from children.
- Take care when serving or walking with hot drinks when young children are around.
- Do not throw aerosols into a campfire or add accelerants of any type.
- Store matches and lighters in a locked cabinet or where children can't reach them.
- Install a heat resistant guard around heaters or fireplaces and secure to the wall or floor.
- Closely supervise children around barbeques and do not use flammable liquids.
- Install smoke alarms on all levels of your home and close to bedrooms.
- Check that bath water temperature is under 38°C before putting a young child in the bath.
- Only use a treadmill when young children are not in the room, install a safety guard around it and unplug after use.

Additional Resources:

- Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Kids Health Burns Prevention information.
- Agency for Clinical Innovation Burn Injury Resources.

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