

MEDIA RELEASE

Preventing burns and protecting kids this Winter

Experts across Sydney Children's Hospitals Network are urging parents and caregivers to be extra vigilant this winter to prevent scald and contact burns in children.

Almost 400 children were treated at both The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick for burn injuries last winter, with the majority of burns caused by hot food and drink as well as coming in contact with a heater.

Hot liquids or steam are the most common causes of burns, followed by contact and flame burns. These injuries are potentially very serious and can cause lifelong scarring, especially if not treated correctly.

At just ten months old George suffered severe burns to his hands after he attempted to climb on his family's gas fireplace. George underwent a number of surgeries to clean his wound, eventually his arm was put in to a cast to let it heal.

George will continue to have treatment for his burns in our outpatient clinic but his mother Amy said she hoped other families wouldn't have to go through the same experience. "Fire safety is so important because these accidents can happen so quickly," she said.

"An understanding of fire safety is essential so you can be prepared in case of an emergency, however it is equally as important to educate children to understand what can be potentially dangerous to them."

Head of Kids Health Child Health Promotion Unit, Suzanne Wicks said burns happen in seconds and applying the correct first-aid as soon as possible is vital.

"Burns are some of the most common childhood injuries," she said.

"Toddlers are most at risk simply because they are curious and they move quickly and unpredictably, gaining access to hot items or surfaces before an adult can intervene. The majority of burn incidents are preventable."

Mrs Wicks said the first step for burns is to apply cool running water to the affected area for 20 minutes. This is a proven effective measure to cool the burn and stop it becoming worse.

"Using cool running water on the burn up to three hours after the incident can reduce the thickness of the burn as well as the time a burn will take to heal."

June is National Burns Awareness Month – an Australia wide campaign by Kidsafe Australia – which focuses on raising awareness of the prevention and correct first aid treatment for burns and scalds.

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How you can prevent scalds in children

- Supervise young children in the kitchen at all times
- Keep hot food and drinks and all kitchen appliances out of reach of young children.
- Take care when serving or walking with hot drinks when young children are around.
- Check the temperature of the water before putting a young child in the bath.

How you can prevent other common burns in children

- Do not throw aerosols into a campfire or add accelerants
- Always supervise children near a campfire.
- Keep all electrical appliances which heat up out of reach of children, including heaters, kettles, irons and hair straighteners. Unplug after use and store away from children.
- 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.
- Only use a treadmill when young children are not in the room, install a safety guard around it and unplug after use.
- Closely supervise children around barbeques and do not use flammable liquids.
- Install smoke alarms on all levels of your home

If your child has suffered a burn

- Use **cool** running water on the burn for **20 minutes**. Remove clothing and jewellery, if possible.
- Call 000 or seek medical help if you are unsure.
- **Never** use ice, cream, gel, toothpaste or butter on a burn as they can make it worse.



For further information on burns prevention, visit the Kids Health website at www.kidshealth.org.au/burns-prevention

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