

Preventing burns and scalds

Information sheet for practitioners working with children and families

Why is this important?

In England and Wales, 130 children are seen in Emergency Departments with burns every day. Scalds result in over 1900 hospital attendances in the under 5s every year. Over 750 children were injured in house fires in 2013-14 in Great Britain. One third of these homes did not have a smoke alarm. The most common causes of burns and scalds in the Under 5s are:

- **Scalds from hot drinks, bath water, boiling kettles, and pans;**
- **Contact with hot household appliances such as cooker hobs, hair straighteners and irons;**
- **Burns from hot heating appliances such as fires, log burners, radiators and pipes.**

Preventing burns and scalds

It is important to encourage parents to understand how their child is likely to develop, and to try to anticipate additional safety measures they are likely to need. Children are drawn to bright, moving objects, and also enjoy imitating older siblings and adults. Older siblings may give their brother or sister an object, not realising how hot certain objects may be. They are also better equipped to move out of areas of danger (such as very hot baths) than their younger siblings.

Systematic reviews show a combination of education **and** providing and fitting safety equipment is the most effective approach to preventing burns and scalds. In most areas, the fires service will carry out a home safety assessment and some will fit free smoke alarms. Health visitors and children's centres can usually make referrals for these assessments. There may also be a home safety equipment scheme in your area you can refer families to for home safety advice, provision and fitting of equipment.

We have produced a leaflet on preventing burns and scalds for you to use with parents. The key safety messages are outlined below. Please discuss these key messages with parents.

Advice that can help parents reduce the risk of burns:

Fires:

Keep candles, matches and lighters out of children's sight and reach;
Have a fireguard in front of electric and gas fires, log burners and open fires;
Have a smoke alarm on each level of their home, and check it is working once a week;
Have a fire escape plan, and practice it with their family;
Be careful with flammable materials (including fancy dress costumes) around flames.

Hot appliances:

Keep any hot appliances out of reach of children. Check hair straighteners and irons are cooling down somewhere safe;
Check appliance cords are not hanging down which children could pull on;
Take care around barbecues.

Sun:

Children's skin is a lot more sensitive than adults'. Always; **slip** on a T shirt, **slap** on a sunhat, and **slop** on some sun block (Factor 50).

Advice that can help parents reduce the risk of scalds:

A baby's skin is thinner than an adult's, and therefore is damaged very easily. It only takes a few SECONDS to get a deep burn from hot water:

at 70°C – 1 sec

at 60°C – 6 sec

at 50°C – 60 sec

Baths:

Always run the cold water first in the bath or sink before adding hot water.

Check the temperature with their elbow or thermometer.

Consider fitting a thermostatic mixer to bath taps, which prevents the water getting too hot.

In the kitchen:

Point the handles of saucepans away from the side of the hob, and move kettles out of children's reach.

Hot Drinks

Put all hot drinks out of the reach of children. A hot drink can still scald a child up to 15 minutes after being poured.

Do not drink hot drinks with a baby on your lap or pass hot drinks over them.

First aid

Do:

- ✓ **Stop** the heat
Remove the hot liquid.
Put any fire on the child out - making the child **stop**, **drop** to the ground, and **roll** on the ground.
- ✓ **Cool the burn** with running cold tap water for **20 minutes** and **remove** all clothing and jewellery if it is easy to take off.
- ✓ **Call for help** - 999, 111 or local GP for advice.
- ✓ **Cover** with cling film or a sterile non-fluffy dressing or cloth.
- ✓ Keep the child as warm as possible while you are doing this.

Do not:

- ✗ Use anything else on the skin. This includes butter, nappy cream, ice, toothpaste, turmeric or tea leaves
- ✗ Try to burst the blisters.

Further information:

Home safety checklists can be downloaded from: <http://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/home-safety/uk/home-checklist.pdf>

NHS Choices has advice on how to childproof the home at: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/safety-under-fives.aspx#close>

Advice on preventing fires is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/firekills>

An injury prevention resource for use with families can be downloaded from:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/injuryresearch/documents/ipb2-final.pdf>

Child Accident Prevention Trust: <http://www.makingthelink.net/>

RoSPA Big Book of Accident Prevention: <http://www.rospa.com/RoSPAWeb/docs/public-health/big-book/index.html>

Red Cross Baby and Child First Aid: <http://www.redcross.org.uk/en/What-we-do/First-aid/Baby-and-Child-First-Aid>

Childrens Burns Trust Charity: <http://www.cbtrust.org.uk> has useful resources and information

British Burn Association Prevention Group: <http://www.britishburnassociation.org/prevention> Includes BBA First Aid Position statement and information on awareness campaigns

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