British Burn Association warns families about serious burn risk from microwave ‘squishy toy’ trend

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The British Burn Association is urging parents, carers, schools and young people to be aware of a dangerous online trend encouraging children to heat gel-filled ‘squishy’ toys in microwave ovens. These toys must never be heated, microwaved, frozen or otherwise used contrary to the manufacturer’s instructions.

Heating a squishy toy can cause its contents to become extremely hot and pressure to build inside. The toy may then split or burst when handled or squeezed, releasing hot, sticky gel that can cling to the skin and cause deep burns. Injuries may affect the face, eyes, hands and chest and can require specialist treatment, surgery or skin grafting.

Mr Nick Arkoulis, Chair of the British Burn Association, said: “This is not a harmless online experiment. A toy may feel safe on the outside while the gel inside is dangerously hot. If it bursts, the heated material can stick to a child’s skin and continue to cause injury. We strongly urge families to speak to children now: never put a squishy toy in a microwave and never copy a social media ‘hack’ involving heat.”

Advice for parents and carers

- Tell children clearly that squishy toys must never be put in a microwave, oven, freezer or near another heat source.
- Encourage children not to copy online challenges or ‘hacks’ without checking with a trusted adult.
- Keep microwave ovens out of young children’s unsupervised use and do not leave pre-set cooking time ready to start.
- Use toys only as directed and retain the packaging and safety information where possible.
- If a toy is damaged, leaking, unusually warm or swollen, do not squeeze or handle it; keep children away from it.

Burns first aid: Cool, Call, Cover

- **Cool** the burn with cool or lukewarm running water for 20 minutes. Remove clothing or jewellery near the injury unless it is stuck to the skin. Do not use ice, creams, oils, butter or toothpaste.

- **Call** 999 for a serious burn or immediate danger. Seek urgent medical advice for burns affecting a child, the face, eyes, hands, feet, joints or genitals, or for any burn that is deep, extensive or caused by hot gel that may remain on the skin.
- **Cover** the burn loosely with cling film laid over the area, or use a clean, non-fluffy dressing. Do not wrap cling film around a limb or the body.

Parents and carers should not share or recreate videos showing the method, even as a warning, because doing so may expose more children to the idea. Instead, share clear prevention messages and report unsafe content through the platform on which it appears.

Notes to editors

The British Burn Association is a charitable organisation concerned with all aspects of burn care. It supports burn prevention, education, research and standards across the United Kingdom and Ireland.

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