

Burns and Scalds



Burns

Children can suffer burns after contact with irons, heaters, cookers, matches, candles, fireworks, open fires, barbecues, cigarette lighters or any other hot surface. Young children are also particularly vulnerable to sunburn.

Scalds

The most common single cause of scalds is hot drinks. Hot liquids cause 70% of all thermal injuries to children. Babies and toddlers are particularly at risk when they grasp cups and mugs of hot tea and coffee. Other common causes include hot oil or fat, water from kettles and steam. Children may also be scalded by hot water from the tap.

Burns and Scald Facts

- In 2002 in the U.K. over 42,000 children under 15 were injured in burn and scald accidents.
- The majority (over 28,000) were under five years old.
- 95% of thermal injuries to children happened at home.
- Over half of all severe burns and scalds happened in the kitchen.
- 32 children under 15 years died as a result of house fires.

Over half of the children who go to casualty with a burn or scald are referred on for further hospital or specialist care and recovery may be long and painful. Many also have to live with permanent scarring.

House Fires

House fires can be caused by cigarettes, candles, chip pan fires or through faulty wiring.

What can be done to prevent burns and scalds?

Hot drinks

- Never pick up or hold a child or baby when you have a hot drink in your hand
- Keep mugs and cups away from the edges of tables and counters - out of sight and reach of young children

Kettles and saucepans

- Use kettles with short and/or curly cords and keep the cords well out of sight and reach of toddlers.
- Use back burners or elements when cooking and turn all pot handles away from edges

Hot water

- Never leave a young child alone in the bathroom
- Ensure that hot water is delivered below 46°C
- Always run the cold water into baths and basins before hot
- Make sure that young children do not play with hot taps. Tap guards are available to help protect young children at bath time

Microwave ovens

- Always stir food or shake bottles heated in the microwave before giving them to a child – microwave heating can produce hot spots.

Cookers, hobs/hotplates and barbecues

- Keep children well away from hot surfaces (including oven doors)
- Remember that barbecues stay hot for several hours after use
- Make sure cookers or barbecues are secure and cannot be pulled over

Heaters and fires

- Fit fireguards to all heaters and fires. Never air clothes over the fireguards
- Remember radiators can get very hot. If possible do not put a child's bed next to a radiator.

Irons

- Do not use irons on the floor
- Unplug the iron immediately after use and put on a high work surface out of the sight and reach of your children while it cools down

Matches, cigarette lighters and candles

- Never leave candles burning unattended and do not allow children to play with them
- Always keep matches and cigarette lighters out of sight and reach of young children
- Teach older children about the dangers fire and use matches and lighters safely

Safety Equipment

Having the right safety equipment can help prevent accidents or can give you vital extra time in the event of a fire.

- **Fit smoke alarms and test them regularly to make sure they are working.** Practice escape routes regularly with older children so they know what to do in an emergency.
- Use fireguards on all fires
- Use a kettle with a curly flex

