

BURNS AND SCALDS

Burns and scalds pose a significant risk to Australian children each year. In the period January to December 2007, there were 1,394 Victorian children treated in hospital for burns and scald injuries that occurred in the home. 69% of these injuries were suffered by children aged 0-4 years.

Hot drinks, cooking oil, foods and fats were the most common causes of hospital admissions, accounting for 34% of injuries. Other causes included other hot liquids and household appliances. Home heaters, fires, BBQ's and irons are the biggest causes of burns injuries, while scald injuries occur most frequently from hot drinks when a child either pulls a cup down on themselves, pulls on an item that causes a drink to fall (e.g. tablecloth), or by running into or being held by someone who spills a hot drink.

Children with burns and scald injuries are more likely to have longer stays in hospital than most other injury types. A child's skin is thinner and more sensitive than an adult's, and will therefore result in a more severe burn.

Hot water temperature in older homes is set between 60-75 °C. Research has shown that by lowering this to 50 °C, you will greatly reduce the chances of your child receiving a life threatening burn/scald.

Hot water burns like fire! At 60° it takes 1 sec for a life threatening scald to an infant. At 50° it takes 5 minutes.

BURNS AND SCALDS SAFETY TIPS:

- Keep hot drinks out of reach.
- Avoid nursing your baby when having a hot drink.
- Keep children out of the kitchen during meal preparation.
- Ensure cords and saucepan handles are out of reach of children.
- Control the temperature of your bathroom hot tap water to a maximum of 50°C.
- Always test the water temperature before bathing a child.
- When running a bath always run the cold water first, and turn it off last. The maximum bathing temperature recommended for young children is 38 °C.
- Install guards around fires and heaters.
- Closely supervise children around BBQ's.



FIRST AID:

- Cool the scald or burn immediately, under cool running water for 20 minutes.
- Remove any clothing immediately, if possible. Clothes can hold the heat and cause a deeper burn.
- Do NOT use ice, oil, butter or ointments on the burn. These can further damage the skin.
- Cover burns with a clean cloth, and seek medical advice. In an emergency, dial 000.