



## Focus On Health

Community Medical Centers is proud to sponsor *Focus on Health*, a medical information radio series from the UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program: growing Valley doctors.

### FAQ: COMMON BURNS

#### Medical Specialist:

William Dominic, M.D.

Assistant Clinical Professor of Surgery, UCSF School of Medicine

Director of Leon S. Peters Burn Center

#### Q. What are the most common types of burns?

A. The most common type of burn is a scald burn. Although scald burns can happen to anyone, this type of burn is the number-one cause of burn injury to children under age 4.

#### Q. Where do burn accidents usually occur within the house, and what are the most common household items associated with scald burns?

A. Scald burns most commonly occur in the kitchen and in the bathtub with tap water. In the kitchen, scald and steam burns are often associated with microwave oven use. Coffee, tea, soup and hot tap water can be hot enough to cause serious burn injury. When in the bathtub, scald burns can occur when tap water reaches 140° F, and can cause a third degree (full thickness) burn in just five seconds.

#### Q. Who is most commonly affected by burn injuries?

A. Hot tap water accounts for 17% of all childhood scald hospitalizations. As with other scald burns, young children and older adults are most at risk. Children cannot always tell the hot from the cold water faucets. They have delicate skin, and often cannot get out of hot water quickly, so they suffer hot water burns most frequently. Elderly and handicapped persons are less agile and more prone to falls in the bath tub. They also may have less ability to sense when water is too hot.

#### Q. What is the most common cause of a scald injury?

A. The most common cause of a scald injury is what the medical field calls a “Pull Down” scald. This occurs when a curious child pulls a cup or a pan with hot liquid down on himself/herself.

**Q. When and how quickly can a scald burn occur?**

- A. Burn accidents frequently occur when parents or caregivers are in a hurry, angry, or under a lot of pressure, and can occur instantly.

Hot water causes third degree burns in a matter of seconds:

- ...in 1 second at 156°
- ...in 2 seconds at 149°
- ...in 5 seconds at 140°
- ...in 15 seconds at 133°.

**Q. What are ways to prevent scald burns in the kitchen?**

- A. Ways to prevent scald burns in the kitchen include:
- Keep children out of the kitchen while cooking.
  - Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
  - Place microwaves at a safe height.
  - Wait one minute before removing covering from a hot pot, pan or dish.
  - Never drink or carry hot liquids while holding a child.
  - Place hot items in the center of the table.
  - Avoid using table cloths.
  - Take time to fix meals without rushing.
  - Test all heated liquid/food before giving it to a child or placing it within his/her reach.
  - Purchase appliances with short cords, and keep all cords from dangling over the edge of counters, i.e., slow cookers, coffee pots, fat fryers and anything that could contain hot liquids.
  - Be sure to inform baby-sitters about kitchen and appliance safety and teach them to prevent burn injuries when preparing meals.

**Q. What are some ways to prevent tap water scald burns?**

- A. The single most important factor in preventing tap water scald burns is to keep continuous and adequate supervision of young children. Here are some other ways to prevent or control tap water scalds:
- Always supervise children in bathtubs.
  - Be sure the hot water heater is at the medium setting 120° F - 125° F.
  - Before placing a child into the bath or getting into the tub yourself, test the temperature of the water by moving your hand rapidly through the water for several seconds. The temperature should not exceed 100° F/39° C. A child's delicate skin will burn more quickly than an adult's.
  - Use extreme caution if bathing small children in the sink. Many sinks have single-lever faucets which are easy for young children to turn on.
  - Consider installing "anti-scald" devices on tub faucets and shower heads to prevent accidental scalds.

**Q. What should a person or parent do in case of a scald injury?**

A. In case of a scald burn:

- Run cool (not cold) water over the burn immediately
- Cover the burn with a clean dry bandage

**Q. What if the burn is significantly large?**

A. If the burn is larger than the palm of a hand or is located on the face, hand, feet or genitals seek immediate attention.

**Q. What are some National and/or local statistics about Scald Burns?**

A. Nationally...

- Over 500,000 scald burns occur annually in the United States.
- The two highest risk populations are children under the age of 5 and adults over 65.
- Scald Burns are the number-one cause of burn injury to children under age 4.
- Hot tap water accounts for 17% of all childhood scald hospitalizations.
- Most people associate burns with flame. In fact, burns are caused more often by liquids than by flames.

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