



## Take Precautions to Prevent Burns

By Penni Overstreet-Murphy – San Bernardino County Fire Department

When we think of things in our homes that might cause burns, there are some obvious culprits. Curling irons. Stoves. Radiators. Tap water?

As surprising as it sounds, it's true. Each year thousands of emergency room visits are attributed to scalds – injuries caused by hot liquid or steam. Adults often experience mild scalds, perhaps when washing dishes, and quickly adjust the temperature without a second thought. But older adults and children's skin is much more sensitive and can sustain a burn in a matter of seconds.

In an effort to prevent scalds and other painful burns, the San Bernardino County Fire Department and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) have teamed up for Fire Prevention Week to help our community **"Stay Fire Smart! Don't Get Burned."** The public safety campaign, which takes place October 4-10, focuses on burn prevention and treatment, as well as ways to keep your home and family safe from the leading causes of fire.

Simple acts such as setting your water heater's thermostat to no higher than 120 degrees F, and installing "anti-scald" devices on tub faucets and shower heads can help protect you and your family from scalds. But these measures alone are not enough. Test your water at the faucet using a cooking thermometer to make sure it is no higher than 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Even if your water heater is set no higher than 120 degrees Fahrenheit, use your wrist, elbow, or the back of your hand as your main guide.

Vigilance is key in burn prevention. Always test the water before placing a child or yourself into the tub. The water should feel warm, not hot. Before you put your child in the tub, test the temperature with your wrist, elbow, or the back of your hand. If you're using a thermometer with a read-out, remember that bath water should be no more than 100 degrees.

Of course, tap water isn't the only liquid that can cause burn injuries. Other precautions you can take to keep your family safe from burns include:

- Keep hot foods and liquids away from tables and counter edges so they cannot be pulled or knocked over.
- Never hold a child in your arms while preparing hot food or drinking a hot beverage.
- Teach children that hot things hurt.
- Wear short or closefitting sleeves when cooking.

All the vigilance in the world may not be sufficient to prevent every single scald or burn. That is why it is also important to know how to treat a burn. Run the burned area under cool water right away for 3-5 minutes and then cover with a clean, dry cloth. If the burn is bigger than your fist or if you have questions, get medical help.

In addition to these important burn prevention strategies, the San Bernardino County Fire Department is encouraging residents and their families to put their safety first by performing a home hazards inspection during Fire Prevention Week. You can pick up a checklist at [www.sbcfire.org](http://www.sbcfire.org) or you can download one from [www.firepreventionweek.org](http://www.firepreventionweek.org).

While Fire Prevention Week is an opportune time to practice fire safety in your home, we hope that you will keep these lessons with you year round and “Stay Fire Smart!”

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