

# Opinion: Tips to prevent scalding injuries

By Eric Guevin

Scald injuries are painful and require prolonged treatment. They may result in lifelong scarring and even death. Prevention of scalds is always preferable to treatment and can be accomplished through simple changes in behavior and the home environment.

In conjunction with Burn Awareness Week, Feb. 5-11, the American Burn Association and Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District are providing information relating to scald burns.

Although anyone can sustain a scald burn, certain people are more likely to be scalded – infants, young children, older adults and people with disabilities. These high-risk groups are also more likely to require hospitalization, suffer complications and experience a difficult recovery. Most burn injuries occur in the person's home and the vast majority of these injuries could have easily been prevented.



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Tap water scalds are often more severe than cooking related scalds.

**The American Burn Association recommends the following simple safety tips to decrease the risk to yourself and those you**

## **love from tap water scalds:**

- Set home water heater thermostats to deliver water at a temperature no higher than 120 degrees. An easy method to test this is to allow hot water to run for three to five minutes, then test with a candy, meat or water thermometer. Adjust the water heater and wait a day to let the temperature drop. Re-test and re-adjust as necessary.
- Provide constant adult supervision of young children or anyone who may experience difficulty removing themselves from hot water on their own.
- Gather all necessary supplies before placing a child in the tub, and keep them within easy reach.
- Fill tub to desired level before getting in. Run cold water first, then add hot. Turn off the hot water first. This can prevent scalding in case someone should fall in while the tub is filling. Mix the water thoroughly and check the temperature by moving your elbow, wrist or hand with spread fingers through the water before allowing someone to get in.
- Install grab bars, shower seats or non-slip flooring in tubs or showers if the person is unsteady or weak.
- Avoid flushing toilets, running water or using the dish or clothes washer while anyone is showering.
- Install anti-scald or tempering devices. These heat sensitive instruments stop or interrupt the flow of water when the temperature reaches a predetermined level and prevent hot water that is too hot from coming out of the tap.

Cooking-related scalds are also easy to prevent.

## **Some things you can do to make your home safer from cooking-related burns include:**

- Establish a “kid zone” out of the traffic path between the

stove and sink where children can safely play and still be supervised. Keep young children in high chairs or play yards, a safe distance from counter- or stovetops, hot liquids, hot surfaces or other cooking hazards.

- Cook on back burners when young children are present. Keep all pot handles turned back, away from the stove edge. All appliance cords should be coiled and away from the counter edge. During mealtime, place hot items in the center of the table, at least 10 inches from the table edge. Use non-slip placemats instead of tablecloths if toddlers are present.
- Never drink or carry hot liquids while carrying or holding a child. Quick motions may cause spilling of the liquid onto the child.

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