



# Prevention and Treatment of Burns Miscellaneous Causes<sup>1</sup>

University Extension<sup>2</sup>

## PREVENT ACCIDENTAL BURNS IN THE KITCHEN

- Heating and cooking equipment are the number one cause of home fire injuries in the United States.
- Keep hot foods and drinks away from the edge of counters and tables. Don't set hot items on tablecloths because children could pull it onto themselves.
- Don't hold a child and something hot at the same time.
- Keep children away from the stove, turn pan handles in, and cook on the rear burners when possible.
- Do NOT allow children to use the microwave without supervision.
  - Children may not realize which dishes or containers are "microwave safe." Some plastics or paper can be overheated in a microwave and catch on fire.
  - They may not re-heat a leftover enough to kill the harmful bacteria growing in it.
  - Children may not realize how hot the bottom of the container "naked" will be.
  - Steam burns to the face and hands are possible if the popcorn or dish is opened too soon.
  - Burns to the mouth can occur due to unevenly heated foods.
  - Eggs, cooked in their shell, can explode, causing second degree burns.

## HOME FIRES

- During an average person's lifetime, households can expect to average two fires serious enough to alert the fire department.
- Nationwide, a residential fire occurs every 67 seconds.
- There were 3,705 fire death in home fires in 1992 and 21,600 injuries.
- Preschool children (age 5 and under) and older adults (age 65 and older) have the highest fire death rates in U.S. home fires.

Critical burns need immediate medical attention because they can be life threatening. A burn is considered critical when any one of the following occurs:

1. Victim has difficulty breathing.
2. Burns cover more than one of the victim's body parts.
3. Burns occur to the head, neck, hands, feet, or genitals.
4. Victim is an infant, young child or an elderly person (and the burn is other than a very minor one).
5. Burns resulted from chemicals, explosions or electricity.

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2. University Extension, University of Missouri-Columbia, Agricultural Engineering Department.

Minor burns only affect the top layer of skin, leaving a red, dry patch of skin. Though painful, these burns will usually heal in 5 to 6 days.

1. Run cool water over the area for several minutes.
2. Wash the area with soap and water. If in doubt about the severity of the burns, treat them as critical and seek medical attention

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Install and maintain smoke detectors on each level of the home and outside each bedroom. For additional information, review MU Guidesheet #1907, "Residential Fire Detection."
- Change the batteries when you change your clocks for daylight-saving time.
- Plan and practice two escape routes from every room in the home.

- Teach children how to get out. Teach them to crawl to the door and test it before opening it. If the door or handle are hot or if smoke is coming in around the door, go out the other way. If they must go out through a window, make sure they know how to open it. Buy an approved chain ladder and teach children how to use it.
- Set up a meeting place outside.
- Phone the fire department from a neighbor's house. Teach children how to report a fire, give clear directions to the house, and to stay on the phone until the dispatcher says they are done.
- Never go back into the house.
- Teach children what to do if their clothes catch on fire. Stop, drop, roll, shout for help, cool the burns with cool water, NOT ice.
- Make sure your children's sleepwear is not flammable. Clothing burn victims are more likely to die as a result of their injuries than people burned any other way. The clothing causes a deeper burn that affects a greater portion of the skin's surface.