# Burns

#### The Problem

Despite the fact that more than 50 percent of all childhood burns are preventable, burn trauma remains a leading cause of death, disfigurement, and injury in children. In the United States alone, one million children sustain burn injury and nearly half seek medical treatment.

Approximately 3,000 children die each year from burn injury, second only to motor vehicle accidents as a cause of accidental death in children ages one through four.

Burns are the most painful type of injury, and the scars from burn accidents last a lifetime. Lengthy hospitalizations, numerous painful operations for skin grafting procedures, and months of rehabilitation are the usual course following a serious burn. The lives of childhood burn survivors are changed dramatically. No amount of reconstructive surgery can erase the damage to burned skin. Children with scars are shunned, ostracized, and ridiculed. Sadly, this can lead to social withdrawal, isolation, poor academic performance, and too often, to suicide.

The majority of childhood burns occur in the home. They are mainly caused by hot liquids, flames, electricity, and direct contact with hot objects. Scald injuries are the most common type of thermal injury in children, with toddlers and pre-school children the most frequent victims. House fires account for 80 percent of all burn deaths.

While the frequency of accidental burn injury is alarming, intentional infliction of injuries

contributes significantly to the statistics. Burn abuse, while horrifying to consider, is an everyday occurrence and is often unrecognized or misdiagnosed. Common mechanisms of burn abuse include forced contact with hot objects, scald injury from intentional splattering or submersion in hot liquids, and inflicted burns from cigarettes.

### The Programs

National Burn Awareness Week is a multimedia program designed to increase public knowledge of the prevalence of all types of burn injury and to promote prevention of injury to children. It provides community outreach and educational tools to be used in locally based burn prevention campaigns.

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign has a more narrowly focused program to educate parents about the dangers of scald burns. The SAFE KIDS Campaign works with more than 90 organizations, Kiwanis International among them, and has more than 100 state and local coalitions that help the campaign achieve its goals. Clubs can find the nearest SAFE KIDS coalition (or learn how to create one) by calling 202/662-0600. You can also find the nearest coalition on their website at www.safekids.org.

#### The Role of Kiwanis

A Kiwanis club can implement a public awareness and prevention campaign to reduce

burn injuries by consulting with and using the materials produced by the Burn Awareness Coalition, the Burn Prevention Foundation, and the SAFE KIDS Campaign. Campaigns may include distribution of literature, posters, videos, public service announcements on radio and TV, billboards, and educational events at schools.

### **Developing a Campaign**

There are several organizations that offer material on burn prevention. You local fire department may also be willing to help with your campaign. The SAFE KIDS Campaign offers a booklet on fire safety that also talks about bur prevention. The booklet is \$21.00 or 100 booklets and can be order from off their website at www.safekids.org . The campaign also offers other brochures on burn prevention.

In developing a burn prevention campaign for the community, the club should consider the strategies and materials described below.

## **Increasing Public Awareness**

"If a disease were killing our children in the proportion that accidents are," declared former US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, "people would be outraged and demand that this killer be stopped." Most people don't realize the magnitude and devastation of childhood burn injury.

A club can generate publicity and promote awareness by sending publicity packets to the local news media. Develop a press release, using statistics from the fire department, burn center, and State Fire Marshal's Office on the scope of burn injuries in the community. Include black and white photographs. Send the packets to local newspapers, magazines, community publications, radio stations, and cable and broadcast TV stations.

Clubs can persuade local or state government officials to designate a day or week for burn injury prevention. A city-wide "Burn Awareness Day" can serve as an excellent kick-off to a campaign or to bring attention to

National Burn Awareness Week. This can be supported with a lecture series, screening of burn prevention videos, or burn and fire safety demonstrations.

There are various handouts, posters, and public service announcements as well as other educational material available from several different organizations on fire safety and burn prevention. To see a complete listing of the suppliers of public education materials, log onto www.fmam.org (Fire Marshal's Association of Minnesota).

#### **Prevention Education**

The next step is to teach parents and care-givers how to prevent burn injuries to children and how to react effectively in a burn emergency.

Educate High Risk Families—Statistics show that the lower a family's socio-economic status, the higher the incidence of burn injuries. Children who are supervised by older siblings or left unsupervised for extended periods of time are at great risk, as are children living in large, multi-family apartment buildings. Statistics also indicate that the non-white population's risk for burn injury is 76 percent greater than that of the white population. Identify children in your community who are at highest risk.

With approval from the manager or administrator of a facility that serves high-risk children, present programs that educate youngsters and their parents. Make sure children know whom to call in an emergency and what to say. Use a toy telephone to teach children how to get help.

Do the children know their addresses? Can house or apartment numbers be seen easily from the street at night? The club could purchase numbers from a hardware store and attach them.

Hold "Parent Alert" sessions that warn them scald burns happen when children:

- Are left unattended in the bathtub and the child turns on the hot water.
- Are placed in water that is too hot.

- Are in the tub when another child turns on the hot water.
- Fall into a tub of hot water.

Stress the SAFE KIDS Campaign's suggestions for safety in the bathroom:

- Never leave your child alone in the bathtub.
- Test the water before you put your child in the bathtub.
- Run cold water first and then adjust the temperature with hot water.
- Face your child away from the bathroom fixtures. Children are less likely to manipulate faucets that are out of sight.
- Turn down the thermostat on the hot water heater to 120° Fahrenheit or 50° Celsius.
- Install an anti-scald device in the faucets and shower head.

#### *Teach safety in the kitchen:*

- Keep children out of the kitchen when cooking, or create a "no" zone in the kitchen.
- Keep appliance cords out of reach.
- Keep tablecloths and place mats out of reach.
- Put pans on back burners and turn all pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Keep hot food away from the table edge.

Train families to treat burn victims quickly and effectively:

- Stop the burning. Remove the source of heat. If clothing catches fire, smother the flames with a blanket or by rolling on the ground.
- Remove all burned clothing. Clothing may retain heat and make the burn deeper. Remove all clothing from the neck as well as the burn area. Swelling may occur immediately.
- Apply cool water over the area. Using a clean, white cloth apply water to the burn for at least three to five minutes.
   Be careful not to break any blisters that may have formed. Cover burns with a soft, clean, dry dressing or bandage.

- Do not pack the burned area in ice. This may increase the severity of the burn.
- Do not apply ointments, butter, or any home-made remedy to the burn. These products retain heat and may make the burn deeper. They may also cause infection.
- Seek medical attention quickly.

Clubs have a choice of several printed pieces and videos that can be used to educate the community. Contact the organization listed below for availability of the products and cost. Additional items can be found at www.fmam.org.

Burn Prevention Foundation 5000 Tilghman Street, Ste. 110 Allentown, PA 18104 610/481-9810 610/481-9813 Fax www.burnprevention.org misc., brochures, curriculum, educational programs, coloring books

Burn Awareness Coalition PO Box 17840 Encino, CA 91416 818/994-4661 National Burn Awareness Week Kit, PSA

Corporate Mark Inc.
547 West County Road E
Shoreview, MN 55126
651/486-7657
www.corporatemark.com
helmets, stickers, pencils, brochures (fire safety)

International Fire Service Training Association – IFSTA

Fire Protection Publications
Oklahoma State University
930 N Willis
Stillwater, OK 74048-8045
800/654-4055
405/744-8204 Fax
www.ifsta.org
Fire & burn safety manual with resource
kit. Fire service training materials, Public Fire
Education

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources USDA Forest Service
Northeast Interagency Fire Cache
402 11<sup>th</sup> Street SE
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
Attn: Smokey Bear Order
218/327-4282
218/327-4581 Fax
www.dnr.state.mn.us
Smokey Bear costume, handouts, comic books, videos

National Crime Prevention Council Specialty Products Office 1 Prospect Street PO Box 229 Amsterdam, NY 12010-0229 518/842-4388 800/995-5121 Fax www.mcgruffspo.com Be Cool About Fire Safety—video, misc. handouts, McGruff—misc., Trick or treat bags

National Consumers League 1701 K St. NW Suite 1200 Washington, DC 20006 202/838-3323 Be Cool about Fire Safety Video

National Council on Fireworks Safety Inc. 655 National Press Building Washington, DC 20045 202/737-8400 202/737-8406 Fax www.fireworksafety.com fact sheets, videos, brochures

National Fire Protection Association – NFPA 1 Batterymarch Park PO Box 9101 Quincy, MA 02269-9101 800/344-3555 800/593-nfpa Fax www.nfpa.org curriculum, videos, handouts, coloring books, misc.

National Safe Kids Campaign Children's National Medical Center 111 Michigan Avenue NW Washington, DC 20010-2970 202/939-4933 www.safekids.org brochures

Play safe! Be safe! 1 Grove Street, Ste 210 Pittsford, NY 14534 716/385-3370 716/264-1754 Fax www.playsafebesafe.com Play Safe! Be Safe! Curriculum ages 3-5 videos, games

Shriners Hospital/Burn Institute 2025 East River Road Minneapolis, MN 55414 612/335-5300 Fire & burn prevention materials

#### **Intervention Activities**

A club also can provide items that will make homes safer.

**Distribute Outlet Plugs**—A club can purchase electrical outlet plugs from the Kiwanis Family Store for 20 cents each and distribute them to families throughout the community.

**Distribute Bath Thermometers**—These thermometers can be distributed by a club as a Young Children: Priority One project. They are available through the Kiwanis Family Store for 85 cents each.

Install anti-scald safety valves—In many low-income multi-family buildings, inadequate plumbing systems, low-cost construction, and a huge demand for hot water often mean boiler temperatures are set drastically high. As a result, water temperatures on lower floors are significantly higher than on upper floors. Where existing plumbing does not regulate water temperatures effectively, safety valves can be installed. A Kiwanis club can investigate local needs and install one of two type regulators.

Safety valves—Using a special temperaturesensitive spring to stop the flow of scalding water, the safety valve is set to react before water temperature reaches 120° Fahrenheit. It senses scalding water and instantly reduces the flow to a trickle. Running cold water through the valve resets it. Clubs can purchase these inexpensive valves and install them or give them to residents to install.

Combination valves—These more expensive valves maintain a constant ratio of hot-to-cold. They are more effective than safety valves but are not widely available and may require installation by a plumber.

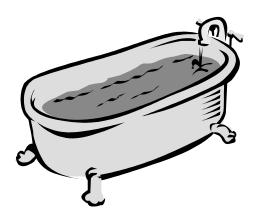
Amend plumbing codes—Children living in large multi-family apartment buildings are more often the victims of severe tap water burns. Water temperatures in some of these areas have been tested at 193°. A child's exposure for just three seconds to water at 140°, a common temperature in most homes, can result in third degree burns requiring hospitalization and skin grafts.

Inadequate regulation allows developers and landlords to install devices that leave many low-cost housing units equipped with fixtures unable to control high water temperatures or regulate water pressure properly.

Plumbing codes are regulations that define the types of products used, the acceptable methods of installation, and the overall construction characteristics of a plumbing system. Codes must be adhered to during the construction of a building or the building will not be approved for occupancy. Plumbing codes to reduce the maximum water temperature in newly constructed residences to the suggested 120° would significantly reduce the number of scald burn victims.

Kiwanis clubs can help amend plumbing codes in these ways:

- Make state, city, and local officials aware of SAFE KIDS code change submissions.
- Send letters of support for the code change to regulations committee members.
- Follow up to ensure that the codes are implemented uniformly and enforced.





## **Every Day 100 Children are Burned**

They are burned in the bathtub and kitchen and must be treated in hospitals. These scald burns can kill children. Usually they leave scars—on a child's face, hands, legs, chest—that can last a lifetime. Most scald burns happen in the kitchen. The worst ones happen in the bathtub. They happen most often to children under four years old.

## IN THE BATHROOM

After the bathtub is filled, put your whole hand in the water and move it quickly back and forth for several seconds. If it feels even a little bit hot. Then it is too hot for your child. Add more cold water. Repeat the test with the other hand. When the water feels comfortable, it is safe to put your child in the bathtub.

## Test the water before you put your child in the bathtub!

Children will turn on the water if they are left alone. One second! That's all it takes for hot tap water to burn a child. So when the phone rings or there is a knock on the door, stay with your child. Others can wait. When the kitchen timer goes off or another child need you—and it can't wait—take your child with you.

## Never leave your child alone in the bathtub!

## IN THE KITCHEN

### Keep it out of reach!

Children are burned when hot liquids or food are left within their reach.

Put pots and pans on rear burners

Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.

Place hot dishes at the back of the counter.

Keep hot foods away from the table's edge.

Keep appliance cords out of reach.

Only use tablecloths and place mats when children aren't around.

# ON AUGUST 19, A KNOCK ON THE DOOR CHANGED THEIR LIVES FOREVER



Last August, 16-month-old Douglas Jarrett and his older brother were enjoying their bath when someone knocked on the door.

Douglas' mother left them to answer it. She had been gone only a few moments when she heard Douglas scream. Running to the bathroom, she found him under the faucet, with scalding hot water pouring onto him. Two weeks later, Douglas died.

Every year, there are 5,000 cases like Douglas'—children severely injured, or even killed, by hot tap water. And perhaps the greatest tragedy is that all of these accidents are preventable.

Please, test the water first. It it's at all uncomfortable to you, it's too hot for them. And never, ever leave children alone in the tub.

Let's keep our children safe.



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