

Fire+Burn Safety

A Guide for Parents of Young Children



Did You Know?

Children under age 7 are at greater risk of injury from fire or non-fire burns. Many day to day activities in the home present a burn risk. Fire and burn injuries in U.S. children of this age account for almost 200 emergency room visits each day. Young children are exploring their new world and it can take awhile for them to learn which items to avoid. They're also more vulnerable to smoke and flames in a fire and have a hard time escaping by themselves.

This guide will walk you through each room in your home and show you how to protect your children from fires and burns.

One Family's Story

On a night in November of 2005, I put out the fire in the playroom's fireplace and put my two kids, Noah, age 7, and Aviana, age 9, to bed. In the middle of the night, I woke up to the sound of the smoke alarm. I went downstairs and felt the door of the playroom, which was not hot. When I opened the door for the cat, smoke poured out and I knew something was wrong. I mistakenly called 911 first, and then ran upstairs to get my kids. The upstairs windows were painted shut, so we used the stairs. Once outside, we discovered that Noah was missing. By the time firefighters arrived, it was too late to save Noah from the toxic effects of inhaling smoke.

— Noah's mother, Suzanne



No one should have to endure the loss of a child. Safe Kids USA reminds parents to keep flammable items away from fireplaces and to create and practice an escape plan, which this guide will teach you. Suzanne hopes parents will heed these fire safety measures to help avoid a tragedy in their own families.

All About Smoke Alarms

In a fire, smoke can kill you. In a flaming fire, there is an average of **3 minutes** after a smoke alarm sounds for you and your family to escape.

Question: How many smoke alarms should I have in my home?

Answer: You should have a **smoke alarm on every level** of your home, including the basement. You should also have one outside each sleeping area and in each bedroom.



Question: How often should I change the batteries in my smoke alarm?

Answer: You should **change the batteries at least once a year**, unless you have alarms with 10-year lithium batteries.

Even if your alarms are connected to the wiring in your home, change the batteries in case of a power failure.

Question: How often should I test the batteries in my smoke alarms?

Answer: You should **test the batteries once a month** to make sure the alarms are working correctly.

Question: My children sleep very deeply. Will they wake up to the smoke alarm?

Answer: Sometimes children will sleep through a smoke alarm. Test your alarms at night to **see if your child will wake up** and respond to the alarm. If your child does not wake up to the alarm, try an alarm where you can program your voice to alert him or her.



For the best protection, install both ionization and photoelectric alarms (or dual sensor alarms).



Living Room

Your living room or den is where your family spends most of its time. Did you know there are many fire and burn risks here too? One important thing to think about is how your living room and the rest of your house are heated. Portable space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves require extra precautions. Here are ways to use heating equipment safely:

Consider This:

Establish a “Kid Free Zone” of at least 3 feet around any type of heating equipment or candles. Young children are naturally curious and drawn toward a fire.



Candles

Candles can add a nice touch to a room, but keep them at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn. Remember to blow them out when you leave the room.

- Keep anything that can burn (furniture, curtains, paper, etc.) **at least 3 feet away** from any heating equipment.
- Always **turn off portable space heaters** before leaving the room or going to bed.
- Always **use the right type of kerosene** in a kerosene heater; never use gasoline or other fuels. Refuel heaters in a well ventilated area and only if the heater is fully cooled.
- Keep a **screen in front of the fireplace**. If it has a glass screen, it can take a long time to cool down and can burn a young child.
- **Use only dry, seasoned hard wood** in a fireplace or wood stove to avoid the build-up of creosote in the chimney (an oily deposit that can catch fire).
- **Vent all fuel-burning equipment** to the outside to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Have the **chimneys of wood stoves and fireplaces cleaned** and inspected once a year.
- Have a **professional install a wood stove**.



Kitchen

Prevent Cooking Fires

- Keep anything that can catch fire (towels, potholders, etc.) **away from your stovetop**.
- **Never leave the kitchen while cooking**.
- Make the **stove area a “Kid-Free Zone”**. Teach your child to stay out of this area. Mark it on the floor with bright tape. Three feet is a good distance.
- If your clothes catch on fire, “**stop, drop, and roll.**”



Prevent Burns

- **Do not hold children while cooking** or carrying hot foods or drinks.
- Cook with **pots and pans on back burners** and turn handles away from the front of the stove.
- Place **hot foods and liquids in the center** of the table or counter.
- Keep **appliance cords (i.e. coffee pot, deep fryer) out of a child’s reach**.
- **Do not allow young children to use the microwave**.



Why are young children at greater risk for burns in the kitchen?

- Their skin is thinner than adults so hot liquids or pans can burn them more quickly.
- Young children are driven to explore their world and do not understand they need to stay away from hot items.
- One- and two-year olds can often reach the counter or stove but cannot see if something hot is there.

Prevent Children from Starting Fires

Did you know that most children are fascinated by fire at an early age? Young children are curious about all aspects of their environment, including fire. Many also like to imitate adults making it important for you to be a good role model. They may see you light a match or use a lighter and think it's OK for them to do the same. Even if you tell them not to touch matches and lighters, they may not listen.

The most common room in the home for children to start fires is the bedroom. Many times, children who start fires know that it's wrong so they don't tell anyone if a fire spreads or they hide in a closet. Then it can be too late.

That's why it's important to take these steps:

- **Lock up matches and lighters** out of children's reach. Children have been known to climb up to reach them in high locations.
- **Teach children to not touch matches or lighters** and **tell an adult** if they find them.
- **Be a good role model** by using fire safely.
- If you suspect your child is **setting fires on purpose, get help**. Your fire department, school, or counseling agency can connect you with experts.

Some lighters look like toys!

Many children are attracted to these lighters because they look like toys. Children have been injured and killed by playing with these types of lighters. Some localities and states have banned stores from selling these products.

CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?



A Grandmother's Story

My grandchildren Nathan, age 4, and Aaliyah, age 1½, were playing in a bedroom when Nathan found a canteen-shaped novelty lighter I didn't know about. He tested it and was surprised when the tall blue flame caught some papers on fire. When his fingers burned, he dropped the papers on the floor. As flames and smoke filled the room, he yelled for help at the door, which had gotten locked from inside. His grandfather couldn't hear him. My daughter, their mother, had just returned home when I called. When she went to check on the kids, she found Aaliyah unconscious and couldn't see Nathan in the smoke. She wrapped Aaliyah in a towel and as she ran outside, yelled into the phone that the house was on fire. She went back to the window for Nathan. Firefighters arrived just in time to get him out. (I had called 911.)

Nathan and Aaliyah suffered severe burns and were flown to Arkansas Children's Hospital. They underwent many surgeries and skin grafts during their five-month hospital stay as well as over the last eight years. Please lock up ALL matches and lighters to prevent any child from experiencing this permanent life-altering tragedy.

— Nathan and Aaliyah's grandmother



In 2006, children playing with fire started 14,500 building fires in the U.S.

Bedroom

You may think that the bedroom is much safer than the kitchen. BUT, here are how many home fires start...

... a space heater is left on overnight

TIP: Always **turn off space heaters** when you go to sleep or leave the room.

Keep a **space heater at least 3 feet away** from anything that can burn — curtains, furniture, clothing, etc.

... a candle is not used correctly.

TIP: Keep **candles at least 12 inches away** from anything that can burn.

Always **blow out candles when you leave** the room or go to sleep.

... a child starts a fire in the bedroom (the most common location inside homes).

TIP: Keep **matches and lighters locked up** where children cannot reach them.

... a clothing iron is left on or is left cooling where children can reach it.

TIP: **Turn off the iron** as soon as you are finished. **Put it out of your child's reach** until it cools down.

Bathroom

A young child's skin is much thinner than an adult's. This makes it easier for children's skin to get burned at lower temperatures. A comfortable bath temperature for you will be too hot for a child. Here are ways to prevent burns during bath time:

- Set your **water heater to 120 degrees**. If you rent, ask your landlord to adjust it. You can test it by running hot tap water over a cooking thermometer.
- When starting a bath, **turn the cold water on first**, then the hot water.
- **Test the bathwater** with your wrist or elbow before placing your child in the tub.
- Seat the child **facing away from the faucet** so he or she won't try to turn it on.
- Consider putting **anti-scald devices on faucets**. These devices turn off the water if the temperature is too hot.
- Remember - **Never leave a child alone in the bathtub** - he or she can burn or drown within seconds!
- **Unplug any appliances** when you are not using them.



Keep curling irons away from small children!



Fire and Burn Safety Essentials!

- Install **smoke alarms on every level** of your home, outside of each sleeping area, and in each bedroom.
- **Replace smoke alarm batteries** once a year even if alarms are hardwired. Ten-year lithium batteries do not need to be replaced.
- Make and **practice a fire escape plan** with at least two ways out of every room. Have a plan to help young children escape the home.
- **Store matches and lighters in locked cabinets.** Teach your child to never touch them.
- Make the **stove area a “Kid-Free Zone”**
Three feet is a good distance.
- **Never leave the kitchen unattended** while cooking and never leave a child alone while cooking.
- Keep **hot foods and liquids away** from children.
- Place **space heaters at least three feet from anything that can catch fire** (curtains, furniture, papers). Always turn off space heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Set your **water heater to 120 degrees.**
- **Never leave young children alone in the bathtub** — a child can burn or drown within seconds.

Tear off this cover and place it on your refrigerator as a reminder.

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