

Preventing a Scald Injury from Hot Food and Drink



Most scald burn injuries happen in the home, usually in connection with the preparation or serving of hot food or drink. Although cooking-related scalds are common in all age groups, they are particularly serious for young children.

Children can get burned when they upset cups of coffee, hot tea, hot chocolate or other hot drinks. They can grab dangling appliance cords or pot handles, and pull on hanging tablecloths. At times they are run into or are being held by someone who spills the hot drink or food they are holding.

Hot food and drink scalds can happen quickly. Often the adults near them do not realise that a child is reaching for the hot item until it is too late to stop them.

Safe Practices

- Establish a safe area, away from the traffic path between the stove and sink, where children can safely play but still be supervised.
- Children and infants in high chairs and playpens should be kept a safe distance from bench or stove tops, hot liquids, hot surfaces or other hazards when food is prepared or served.
- Provide safe toys for children rather than your pots and pans to occupy a child's attention. Young children are unable to distinguish between a "safe" or "play" pan that they perceive as a toy and one used for cooking, which they may reach for on the stove.

- During meal time, place hot items in the centre of the table, at least 20cm from the edge.
- Use non-slip placemats instead of tablecloths if toddlers are present. Young children may use the table cloth to pull themselves up, causing hot food and drinks to spill down on them.
- Avoid feeding or cuddling your child when having a hot drink. Take tea breaks when your child is resting or sleeping.
- Use a stable, broad-based mug.
- Avoid putting hot drinks in a cup your child drinks from, or allowing your child to sip from your hot drink.

Baby Bottles

Microwave ovens used for heating babies' or young children's milk or food can cause scalds to the mouth.

Safe Practices

- The best and safest way to warm bottles is by standing the bottle in warm water.
- Specially designed bottle warmers are available.
- It is not recommended to heat bottles in the microwave oven.
- Test heated milk or water until it is warm to touch when sprinkled onto your wrist. While the bottle is warming place the **hot** container in the sink or in a safe place where children cannot reach it.



Microwave ovens are involved in a large number of scalding incidents. Microwave ovens heat unevenly and may contain 'hot spots' that will burn a child's mouth.



Serving Hot Food and Drink in Canteens

Soup, hot drinks and noodles can provide tasty food choices for canteens. Before selling soup, hot drinks and noodles ensure procedures are in place for safe preparation, handling and serving.

Many factors affect the time a liquid takes to cool so there cannot be a single procedure for all soups, hot drinks and noodles.

For example:

- heavy based saucepans can retain the heat for longer than thin saucepans
- different soup bases cool more slowly eg. potato based soups retain heat longer
- microwaves can heat food unevenly and may result in very hot patches

The canteen must have procedures in place when dealing with soups, hot drinks and noodles. Procedures may include:

- Temperature guidelines for safe storage and serving
- Method of heating
- Timeframes for cooling down foods and liquids
- Serving temperatures for various products
- Serving and collection points away from crowded areas
- Type of serving vessels (eg Styrofoam cups retain heat but minimise contact heat)
- Use of lids (removal of lid could lead to scalds)
- Children being seated whilst eating/drinking

Noodles

Spilling noodles heated in a microwave oven can cause burns to children.

Noodles are a great snack especially for school age children when they arrive home from school, from sport or have just been playing.

If a hot noodle attaches itself to the skin it will stick, making it hard to remove immediately. This allows the noodle to burn into the skin longer and deeper. If placed into a child's mouth the same burn can occur.

Safe Practices

- Heat noodles ***under adult supervision.***
- Ensure noodles are not overheated and never boiled.
- When microwaving noodles, be careful of the uneven heating of food.
- Heated noodles should be removed carefully from the microwave oven or stove either by an adult or under adult supervision.
- Noodles should be allowed to cool before given to a child or eaten.
- When children are older they should be taught the correct use of the microwave oven or stove.

Serving Noodles in Canteens

- Prepared noodles well before sale so that they can cool before serving to students.
- Noodles should be left to stand for at least ten minutes so that the hot water has been soaked up and the temperature is lower.

This applies to primary and high schools as accidents can occur any time. Due to hazards found in a school environment, and the lack of supervision once a food is served over the counter, water that has just boiled should not be dispensed to students.

For further information refer to information sheets and brochure available to download from kidsafensw.org

- *Scald Injury Prevention*
- *Hot Water burns like fire*

For information on School Canteens visit:

- Healthy Kids School Canteen Association healthy-kids.com.au

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