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[EPA's Lead in your home, a Parent's Reference Guide](#)

[Tobacco Free Allegheny](#)

[The PA Free Quitline](#)



# Safe At Home

The *Safe at Home* newsletter is produced by the Safe and Healthy Homes Program of the Allegheny County Health Department. Quarterly we will be addressing relevant and timely home health and safety issues pertinent to our community partners and the populations they serve. Feel free to print and distribute any information from our newsletter that is relevant to your staff and clients.

Please let us know if there are any particular issues that may be of interest, and we will do our best to accommodate these requests.

We look forward to working with you and your families to make their homes safer and healthier. As always, we encourage you to refer any families that may desire to learn more about their home and the hazards which exist.



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## Burn Hazards in the Home

As the leaves change color and the weather gets colder, we tend to spend more time inside where it is warm. This may include activities such as cooking, baking, putting up holiday decorations, and sitting by a cozy fireplace with a mug of hot apple cider. However, all these activities have the potential for burns especially among young children. The American Burn Association reports that children under age 5 are 2.4 times as likely as the general population to suffer burn injuries requiring emergency medical treatment. Below are some common household sources for burns as well as some tips on how to prevent burns in the home.

### 1) Hot Liquids

According to the American Burn Association, 61% of burns from hot liquids happen to children under the age of five. It is recommended to keep hot liquids and hot foods out of reach of children, use the back burners on the stove whenever possible, and turn pot handles towards the back of the stove. Avoid using a microwave to heat baby bottles. Never leave items cooking on the stove unattended. Due to the potential for burns and other injuries, children should not be permitted in the kitchen while someone is cooking. Other possible sources of burns in kitchens besides hot liquids include stoves, ovens, and other small kitchen appliances.

## 2) Tap Water

When people typically think of hot liquids, they do not always consider hot tap water. A hot tap water temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit can cause a third-degree burn in just five seconds. For safety reasons, it is recommended to have a hot tap water temperature between 110- and 120-degrees Fahrenheit. In addition, young children should not be left alone in a bathtub unsupervised due to the potential for burns from hot water. An adult should always test the bath water temperature before placing a child in the tub. Anti-scald devices can be installed on water faucets and showerheads. In addition, thermostatic mixing valves which regulate the plumbing of the entire home are also available.

## 3) Candles and Lighters

Like hot liquids, caution should also be used with items that have open flames such as candles and lighters. Candles should not be left unattended especially when nobody is home or while sleeping. Candles should not be placed in a location where they could be knocked over, reached by children, or near flammable items. Lighters and matches should be stored out of reach of children and locked up if possible.

## 4) Home Heating

As the start of heating season approaches, it is important to note that heating systems and their components can also be sources of burns. Keep children away from fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, furnaces, and space heaters. Radiators and baseboard heaters should be properly covered in order to prevent burns.

**For more information on how to prevent burns in the home, please see the links below:**

American Burn Association <http://ameriburn.org/prevention/prevention-resources/#1493037731300-e4bd5ba9-3769>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/safekids/burns/index.html>

Safe Kids Worldwide <https://www.safekids.org/tip/burns-and-scalds-prevention-tips>

## Choking and Strangulation Hazards

Of course, we are all here to reduce injury and illness to children. An article in *Clinics* states that accidental threats to breathing (non-drowning) constituted the leading cause of death among children less than 1 year of age. Children under 4 years old are also at a greater risk of serious injury or death due to airway obstruction. We already know most of the choking and strangulation accidents, also known as asphyxia, happen at home. So, let us talk about where those dangers are coming from and how to reduce them.



Strangulation can happen with anything from clothing and blankets to cords on toys and window blinds. Young children have smaller and less rigid windpipes, meaning they can suffocate much quicker than adults or older children when their necks are constricted. According to Child Accident Prevention Trust, a toddler could lose consciousness in just 15 seconds and die within just a few minutes. This is also one reason why safe sleep situations, such as the ABC method (Alone, on their Back, in a Crib), are so important for infants. Blinds with cords should either be replaced, or cords kept out of reach, even from furniture that may be climbed. Be sure straps or cords, such as a pacifier tether, are kept under 6 inches. You may also want to consider removing drawstrings from jackets or sweatshirts as they may become entangled or caught on things like playground equipment or doors and windows. Do not allow little ones to wear necklaces, ribbons, or other items around their necks.



The majority of children's choking incidents are associated with food, coins, and toys with over 50% being attributed to food. According to an article from Nationwide Children's Hospital, on average, a child will die every 5 days in the US from choking on food. They also suggest that children younger than 4 not be fed hard foods such as nuts, hard candy, and chunks of raw vegetables. Avoid round and soft foods such as grapes, chunks of cheese sticks, or slices of hotdog, instead cut these types of items lengthwise or in pieces about the size of a fingernail. Hotdogs cause more choking deaths than any other food posing the biggest risk. Always insist on children sitting down to eat. For non-food items you may want to get a small object tester or keep around a toilet paper roll (though slightly bigger than desired), as they allow you to determine if a child under 3 years old can choke on an item. In addition to coins and toys keep items such as marbles or other small balls, buttons, pen caps, balloons, jewelry, and especially magnets and small batteries out of reach. Beyond choking, magnets and batteries can cause a host of other injuries if swallowed.

Hopefully with this information we can prevent these incidences. But accidents do happen so this is another good reason to consider learning to do the Heimlich maneuver and CPR.

For more information on preventing choking and strangulation please visit:

<https://www.safekids.org/tip/choking-and-strangulation-prevention-tips>

<https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/kohls-injury-prevention-program/choking-and-suffocation>





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