

# ...a pound of cure

## Scald burns

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The Montreal Children's Hospital developed the first Pediatric Burn Trauma Unit in Quebec in 1971. Thirty-eight years later, the program continues to provide innovative, state-of-the-art care to children and teens throughout the province. Program members work together to meet the multi-faceted medical, nursing, rehabilitation, and psychosocial needs of our burn trauma patients and their families. Each year, close to 200 burn trauma patients are treated in our Emergency Department. Of these patients, 75% sustain scald burns, the majority of who are 5 years old and younger. At least 80% of burn trauma patients requiring hospitalization sustain their injuries from hot liquids such as boiling water, hot beverages, liquids removed from the microwave, or steam.

According to experts in burn trauma, a child can develop a severe (third degree) burn in only one second when water temperature is 68°C (155°F). When the temperature is 56°C (133°F), it takes 15 seconds.

Close supervision is the single most important factor in preventing scald burns. Children have little understanding of the dangers in their surrounding environment or the potential consequences of their impulsive behaviours. Scald burns can be devastating, necessitating a long recovery and, in some cases, resulting in permanent disfigurement. It is important to remember that they can be prevented.

### Some practical tips for parents and caregivers:

- Set your hot water heater at 48°C (120°F).
- Check the water temperature before putting your child in a bathtub. The safest temperature for bathing is below 37°C (100°F).
- Seat your child facing away from the faucets so he/she cannot reach them.
- Turn all pot/pan handles inward when cooking.
- Never cook at the stove while holding a child in your arms.
- Do not let electrical cords dangle from countertops. Make sure electrical cords are out of your child's reach. Infants in child walkers (which are banned in Canada) have increased mobility and height and can easily come in contact with dangling cords and pot handles.
- Avoid carrying or picking up a child when holding hot liquids.
- Keep all hot liquids out of the reach of children; do not place them on low coffee or end tables.
- Use non-slip placemats instead of tablecloths so that your child cannot pull hot food onto him/herself.
- Never heat baby bottles of formula or milk in the microwave, especially those with plastic bottle liners. They can burst, releasing scalding liquids. Warm the milk in a pot or in a steaming bottle warmer.

**For more about scald burns and other types of trauma and injury prevention information, visit the Hospital's new Trauma website at [thechildren.com/trauma](http://thechildren.com/trauma). ■**