

fact sheet

The Facts

A scald is a burn injury caused by hot liquid, hot vapour or steam. For young children, scalds are commonly associated with hot drinks; water being boiled for drinks; cooking and hot food; and hot tap water.

Of young children admitted to hospital for scalds, one in five are injured so severely that they need to be in hospital for at least a week. Most hospitalised children need repeat visits, and often, multiple operations.

Scald injuries cause a lot of pain for a significant time period. Severe scalds can scar a child for life!

Hot Tap Water Scalds

Each year in Queensland around 1200 children under the age of fifteen present at hospital as a result of scalds. 65% of these children are aged 4 and under. Nearly half of all these children need to be admitted to hospital.*

Most serious scalds are caused by hot tap water. 9 out of 10 hot tap water scalds happen in the bathroom. Tap (shower) water scalds require an average of 37 days hospitalisation, bath water an average of 18 days hospitalisation.

At 60°C, hot water can cause a full thickness (third degree) burn in less than one second! Most hot water systems hold water between 65 and 75 degrees Celsius.



Most hot water systems deliver water between 65°C and 75°C.

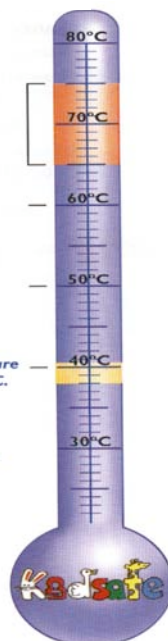
Australian Standards require hot water to be stored at no less than 60°C, to kill bacteria.

Australian Standards recommend 50°C as the maximum hot water delivery temperature for bathrooms.

A safe hot water bathing temperature for children and adults is 38-40.5°C.

At 50°C, hot water takes 5 minutes to cause a third degree burn. A hot water delivery temperature of 50°C is safer because it increases the time to respond, if a scald occurs.

Ask your plumber to control the delivery temperature of hot water in your bathroom.

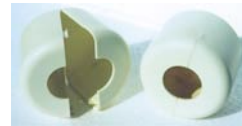


REMEMBER:

Hot Water Burns Like Fire

Safety with hot tap water

- Control the temperature of your bathroom hot tap water to a maximum of 50°C. Your licensed plumber can tell you how best to achieve this.
- Always test the water's temperature before bathing a child. Use the inside of your wrist. Hold it in the water for a slow count of five. It should be comfortably warm, not hot. Note: the maximum recommended temperature for bathing a baby is 38°C.
- Child resistant taps/tap covers can help, but won't stop a child falling into a bath that is already run.
- When running a bath always run the cold water first (and turn it off last).
- Always stay with children when they are in the bathroom. Take them with you if you have to leave the room. Avoid leaving them in the care of older kids.
- Turn taps off tightly, and keep the bathroom door closed when not in use.



Tap Covers



Tempering Valve



Continuous Flow Hot Water System

Current Legislation

It is now law in Queensland (National Plumbing and Drainage Code AS 3500.4.2 1998) that the delivery of hot water be controlled to all sanitary fixtures i.e. baths, basins and showers.

Hot water temperature for all new buildings and all new hot water installations shall not exceed:

- 45°C for early childhood centres, primary and secondary schools and nursing homes or similar facilities for young, aged, sick or disabled persons; and
- 50°C in all other buildings.

NOTE: Compliance with these temperature limits is optional for kitchen sinks and laundry tubs.

For more information on your hot tap water options contact your licensed plumber displaying the MPA sign of security in your local newspaper or telephone directory.



Hot Food and Drink Scalds

Hot drink scalds usually involve a young child pulling a cup down on themselves; pulling down on an item (e.g. a tablecloth) that causes a drink to fall; or running into/being held by someone who has a drink and spills it. Children aged one to two years are most likely to be scalded in this way.

Injuries are usually to the head, face, chest and hands. Hot drink scalds can happen quickly, often with adults nearby who do not realise a child is reaching for the hot drink until it is too late to stop them.

To a small child the home is full of exciting things to touch, grab and climb. Children may grab hot cups, kettles, pots, pans and taps. They do not know that hot water burns like fire and can scar for life.

You can stop your child from being scalded by watching them and by making some simple changes in the home.

Kettles

- Keep kettles, jugs, teapots, coffee plungers and cords away from the edge of the bench.
- Use a cordless kettle.
- Buy a curly electric cord or tie your kettle cord out of reach of children.



Hot Drinks

- Put hot drinks in the centre of the dinner table or somewhere else out of reach.
- Use non-slip place mats instead of table cloths
- Give toddlers their own special mug so they do not drink from yours
- Use broad-based commuter mugs with a lid
- Put your child down before having a hot drink



Pots and Pans

- Keep young children out of the kitchen while cooking
- Fit a gate across your kitchen doorway
- Place children in a playpen
- Put your child down before using hot pots, pans and kettles
- Place microwaves at a safe height. The user's face should be higher than the door.
- Fit a stove guard around your stove top.
- Use back hot plates before the front ones.
- Turn pot handles away from the front of the stove or bench.



Scalds Facts

- **Hot water can scald for up to 30 minutes after it is boiled. A fresh, piping hot drink can scald in a second.**
- **A cup of hot liquid spilled over a baby or toddler is equivalent to a bucket of hot water being spilled over an adult.**

First Aid for Scalds

1. **Remove wet clothes.** This helps the heat to escape from the skin. Leave clothing on if stuck to the skin
2. **Immediately apply lots of cool water** to the scald for 20 minutes. Do not use ice or ice water: it will damage the skin
3. **Keep the child warm.** This will help to prevent the child from going into shock.
4. See a doctor if the scald is:
 - On the face, hands, feet, genitals or buttocks
 - Larger than a 20c coin or blistered
 - In an emergency phone 000 for an ambulance

The Queensland Government has a brochure called Hot Water Burns Like Fire. To view, click on the following link:

www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/documents/tphun/28207.pdf

*Figures extrapolated from data provided by QISU 2006
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