

## Winter fire safety

New Burn patients have increased approximately 65% over the last six years, with most of that increase being children under 4 years of age.

Scalds make up about half of all patients treated at the Stuart Pegg Paediatric Burns Centre (RBH). That's about 300 children every year.

Contrary to the belief that it's the bathroom where kids most commonly get burned—that only accounts for a small proportion (10%). It's the kitchen that's the real danger area for children, with instant noodles being responsible for just as many burns as the bath.

Add to that the spills from cooking, kettles and saucepans, the real *red zone* is the kitchen where mum or dad are preparing food and drinks. 85% of all scalds are caused in the kitchen. Hot drinks that are left too close to the edge of the kitchen bench or table, where kids reach up and pull them down on themselves (usually chest, neck and face) are a major culprit.

If parents kept hot drinks in the centre of the table or away from the edge of the kitchen bench, scalds would be reduced by over one third (36%). Burns from hot water in the bathroom are mostly from homes that still don't have tempering valves installed. Water at 60 degrees causes a third-degree burn in 1 second but water at 50 degrees takes 5 minutes to cause a third-degree burn! Tempering valve use has been mandatory for 10 years, but there are still homes that do not comply.

### More tips for staying safe

**Smoke alarms and evacuation plans:** April 1 is the day to change the batteries in your smoke alarms. It is mandatory for all homes in Queensland to have a working smoke alarm, so make sure it is working. Prepare and practise an escape plan with your family. Call 000 from a neighbour's house and never go back into a burning house. Call 1300 369 003 to book your FREE safehome

At the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Fire Safety and Education Centre last month the Office of Fair Trading demonstrated how easily children's clothing and bedding can ignite near bar heaters. Even though the flannelette pyjamas were rated low fire danger, flannelette is a highly flammable fabric. It is the close-fitting design that gives them the low fire danger label. Within 30 seconds on laying the pyjamas on the radiant heater they were smoking and by the 1 minute mark they were in flames. So do not rely solely on the fire danger ratings, do not leave children unattended near heaters and turn heaters off if you leave the room.



visit from the fire station nearest to you to discuss smoke alarms and evacuation plans.

**Electric Blankets:** If you use an electric blanket have an electrician check it. Blankets that have been folded and unused in cupboards for the summer months may pose a fire hazard through faulty wiring.

**Hot Water Bottles:** Hot water bottle burns are relatively uncommon in our warm Queensland climate, so be aware that hot water bottles when stored for a lengthy period will perish. A number of children have been seriously burned when hot water bottles burst under the weight of the child (or parent) when either rolled on in bed or accidentally stepped on the floor. Some of these burns are significant enough to require skin grafts. Half fill with hot tap water only.

**Bar heaters:** Sometimes when a cold snap hits we often look for the easiest and cheapest option—the radiant bar heater. These heaters left in a child's bedroom at night can be a

lethal hazard if the child kicks the bedclothes off and these catch alight or fills the room with toxic smoke. Keep a clear space of one metre around heaters.

**Clothing labels:** Clothing labelling is confusing – as it depends on fabric and fit. 100% cotton is labelled 'low risk' when it's a snug fit, and 'high risk' when it's a loose fit. Flannelette (still 100% cotton) is 'high risk' no matter what the fit. There is also a misconception that cotton, as a natural fabric is low risk like wool, and that synthetic fabrics are high risk. More commonly synthetic fabrics have retardants which can make them burn more slowly and less easy to ignite, but unless they are labelled (correctly) the consumer cannot tell. Fire risk warnings on clothing are only applicable to children's nightwear, and parents need to be aware that if their child sleeps in daywear it is generally not safe when too close to heaters.

Finally, *securely screen fireplaces and combustion stoves.*

# Children 'invisible' behind the family sedan

What happened to Brendan and Fiona Cannon has happened to seven other Queensland families over the last six weeks - highlighting the need for parents to be aware of measures they can take to prevent these tragic incidents.

Luckily, in all cases there were no deaths, but serious injuries occur and the family is often affected by how close they have come to an unhappy outcome.

In Queensland over the past 10 years 900 children aged 0-15 have been admitted to hospital after being seriously injured in low speed run-over events. In the past five year a further 19 children were fatally injured.

These injuries are commonly in the driveway of their own home and in the majority of cases it is mum or dad who is in the driver's seat at the time.

Most of the fatalities and serious injuries are reversing accidents which underlines the importance of parents knowing where their children are at all times.

While 4WD vehicles were involved in more than half of the fatalities, it is ordinary passenger cars that account for the majority of the accidents causing major injuries. Over 80% of vehicles involved in low-speed run over incidents were passenger vehicles.

Thank you Brendan and Fiona for being brave and telling their story on 60 Minutes ([watch it now](#)) in the

hope that other parents won't go through this terrible ordeal.

The key prevention messages surfacing from the most up-to-date research both nationally and internationally are:

**1. Supervise Children:** Know where the children are and hold them close if you are moving vehicles. If you are home alone and need to move the car either have the children all appropriately restrained in the vehicle when moving or, if another adult is around, make sure they have all the children safely secured in the house or well away from the vehicle.

**2. Separate Driveway:** Separate the play areas from driveways. Some design features that may assist in this include: high handles on garage doors if your house opens directly into the garage, self closing doors and fences between the driveway and front lawn. (Consider pool gates as side fence gates!) Keep toys away from the garage or driveway.

**3. See: Walk around your car.** A good habit is to walk around the vehicle to check no one is quietly hiding behind the vehicle. Install cameras and/or sensors. Whilst this technology is primarily used to prevent damage to vehicles, sensors will alert you to all static objects near the rear of the car. A combination of sensors AND a camera can offer better sense of what is behind the vehicle.

Each step makes a Kidsafe home.



## Reversing visibility index

NRMA Insurance developed the world's first index that measures how well a driver can see out of the back of the car. All cars have a 'blind' area that can hide a child.

Here are some examples of the minimum distance to view an object behind the vehicle: 2002 Volkswagen Polo 3-door hatch — 5.25 metres; 2008 Mazda 6 sedan — 14.4 metres; and 2009 Honda Odyssey wagon — 10.5 metres. Check the distance behind your car @ [NRMA Insurance](#).

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**Driveway safety**—use these three strategies **IN COMBINATION** to reduce the risk for runover incidents.

### Supervise

Know where your kids are and hold them close or put them in the car with you when moving the vehicle.



### Separate

Keep garages and driveways separate from play area with fences and/or self-latching gates.



### See

Walk around your car and use your reversing mirrors, sensors or cameras with children in mind.

***If you don't know... DON'T GO!***

## Smart to order Supplies online:

If you need office stationary and equipment, consider ordering online through Smart Supplies AND on checkout please tick the donate to Kidsafe Queensland! Smart Supplies have been in the business for 30 years and are big believers in giving back to the community. SO, two percent of any online order can be donated back to Kidsafe Queensland — at no extra cost to the customer! Go to [www.smartsupplies.com.au](http://www.smartsupplies.com.au).

## First aid training:

You are invited to book now for infant and child first aid sessions on 14, 25 August and 4, 12 September. This training is ideal for parents, grandparents, and other child carers. Each session begins with a guided tour of Kidsafe House, followed by morning tea and practical first aid training including resuscitation (CPR for babies and toddlers using practice mannequins), drowning, choking, fevers and febrile convulsions, burns and scalds, breathing difficulties, head injuries, severe allergic reactions and the use of EpiPens, and poisons, bites and stings. Places are limited so please call Kidsafe Qld on 3854 1829 to book your place.

## Gift certificates

Stuck for a gift for a baby shower, birthday or Father's Day? What about a gift certificate from Kidsafe Queensland for safety products, capsule hire, child restraints or even first aid sessions. Come into Kidsafe House to look around and choose your certificate.

## Product recalls

In past month the ACCC has issued recalls for several products including: [IGC Dorel activity centres](#), a [3-in-1 booster seat](#) for sale by Kjaday on Ebay, [Apachee](#) girls and boys dressing gowns, the [Artwrap novelty Easter Bag](#), Trade Secret [Little Guys underwear set](#) and the [Rene Rolf baby sleep suit](#) and a [magnetic drawing board](#) sold through Sam's warehouse and Crazy Clarks. Log onto the [ACCC website](#) and register for alerts.

## Visibility vests that children want to wear:

Kidsafe is pleased to announce a great new safety product for children. The Vizzy Vest was created by a Perth-based mother of two with two important features in mind—high visibility and cute designs in a one-size fits all.

Designs include Butterfly, Dinosaur, Balletina, Superhero, Flower and Shark. The vests retail for \$25 each.



## Treadmills – a growing concern

Medical staff at the Royal Children's Hospital Burns Centre in Brisbane have been concerned at the escalating numbers of children who have presented with severe friction burn injury. A growing awareness of health and fitness coupled with the reduction of treadmill costs has led to an increasing number of treadmills being introduced into Queensland homes. However, the injury risk associated with treadmills in the home is largely unrecognised.

A recent study conducted in the RCH Stuart Pegg Paediatric Burns Centre (and published in the Journal of Paediatrics and child Health 45(2009):310-312) found that friction burns are severe injuries to children's hands, fingers and/or forearms, and almost one third of these result in tissue damage deep enough to require skin grafts.

Incidents occurred while someone else other than the injured child was using the treadmill and severity is often exacerbated by children being wedged or entrapped under the running bed. Children under 4 years are particularly vulnerable with two thirds of injury in this age group.

Since 1995 (15.5 years up to May 2010) there have been a total of 113 children with treadmill injury, however, the majority have been injured in the last five years. Prior to this time, this was an injury rarely seen, with only 4 children injured in the period 1995-2003.

The ACCC recently conducted a product Safety Review on Treadmills which has resulted in national legislative changes prescribing a safety standard that all treadmills carry a label warning of the dangers to children of friction injury. This safety standard is mandatory in Queensland and nationally since December 2009. Look for treadmills that have protective covers to keep little fingers and hands away from as many moving parts as possible. In the absence of an Australian Standard for design of treadmills - which might prevent entrapments of children's hands and limbs - these other measures will help to reduce injury:

- If you can, use your treadmill in a room away from young children.
- If this is not possible:
  - use safety barriers (like a playpen) to keep children away from the treadmill
  - do not use your treadmill when young children are around
  - keep your treadmill in a position where you can see others approaching
- Always keep your treadmill unplugged when not in use and keep the magnetic key out of reach of children.
- Store your treadmill well away from children's reach.
- Always supervise older children if they are using a treadmill.
- When you buy a new treadmill choose one with protective covers and a safety stop switch.