National Burn Awareness Week is Feb. 3-9. The Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control joined fire and life safety educators across the state in reminding parents and caregivers that fire is just one cause of burn injuries. Children also can be seriously injured by hot foods and beverages, heating appliances, hot pots and pans, electrical currents and chemicals.

This year's focus of Burn Awareness Week is preventing scald burn injuries.

Hot water scalds are the leading cause of burns to young children and can be caused by hot liquids or steam. Hot tap water accounts for almost one in four of all scald burns among children and is associated with more deaths and hospitalizations than any other hot liquid burns.

Young children are particularly at risk because they cannot recognize heat-related hazards quickly enough to react appropriately. Children's skin is thinner than adults' and burns at lower temperatures and more deeply. A child exposed to 140-degree Fahrenheit liquid for five seconds will sustain a third-degree burn.

"Burn hazards to children include hot foods and beverages, space heaters, steam irons and curling irons," said Paul Cooke, director of the Division of Fire Prevention and Control. "There's a lot you can do around the home to minimize the risk of burn injuries."

The Division urges caregivers to:

—Check water temperature. Set water heaters to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. When using water taps, always turn the cold water on first; then add hot. Reverse the order when turning water off. Always check bath and sink water with wrist or elbow before placing a child in it.

—Childproof the home. Keep burning candles, matches and lighters out of the reach of children. Playing with matches and lighters is one of the leading causes of fire deaths to young children. Keep these items locked up out of sight and out of reach. Discuss good fires and bad fires and how matches and lighters are for adults. Explain that these items are not toys.

—Prevent spills. Cook with pots and pans on back burners and turn handles away from the front. Place containers of hot food or liquid away from the edge of counters or tables and remove tablecloths so children don't accidentally pull hot items down onto themselves.

—Establish a "kid-free zone." Establish a three-foot kid-free zone around the stove area. Never leave a child alone in the kitchen. Don't hold children while cooking or while carrying hot foods and beverages.

—Test food and drink temperature. Taste cooked foods and heated liquids to make sure they're not too hot for children. Never microwave a baby's bottle. Drinks heated in a microwave may be much hotter than their containers. Instead, heat bottles with warm water and test them before feeding your child.

-—Keep electrical cords out of reach—especially cords connected to heating appliances, such as coffee pots and deep fryers. Make sure electrical cords can't be pulled or snagged into a bathtub or sink. Never leave a hot iron sitting on an ironing board unattended.

—Actively supervise. Simply being in the same room with a child is not necessarily supervising. Safety precautions are important, but there is no substitute for giving children full attention.

If a child is burned, the burned area should be placed in, or flushed with, cool water. Keep the burned area in the cool water for 10-15 minutes. Never use ice, ointments or butter. If the burn is severe, immediately seek emergency assistance.

For additional information contact the local fire department or these additional resources:

—Division of Fire Prevention and Control for general background information on scald burns, www.cdfpc.org/docs/DFPC_Scald_Burns.pdf
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—American Burn Association, www.ameriburn.org .

—Shriners Hospitals for Children for burn awareness, http://www.shrinershospitalsforchildren.org/Education/BurnAwareness.aspx .

—Safe Kids USA for burn prevention, http://www.safekids.org/our-work/programs/fire-burn-prevention/ .

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