

Child Abuse & Neglect Tips

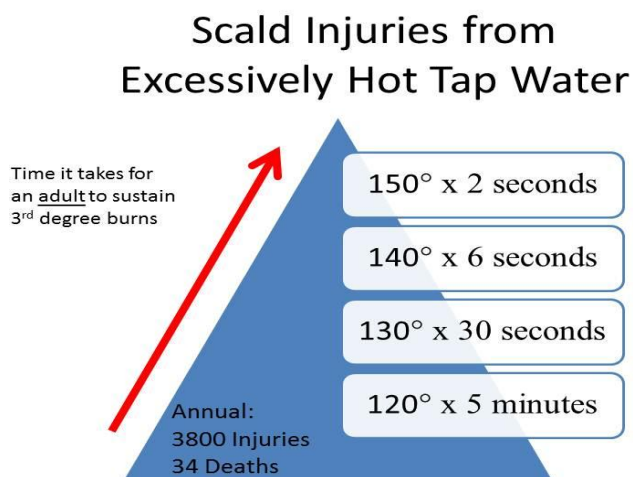
"DID YOU KNOW?"

Did you know that the most dangerous type of 'abusive burns' results from immersion scald burns from excessively hot tap water – more than cigarette, dry contact and flame burns?

- 26% - 34% of tap water scald burns are secondary to non-accidental trauma^{1,2}.
- 16% - 30% of children with immersion scalds die³.

Each year across the United States, approximately 3,800 injuries and 34 deaths occur in the home due to scalding from excessively hot tap water. The majority of these accidents involve the **elderly and children under the age of five**. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) urges all users to lower their water heaters to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Most **adults** will suffer third-degree burns if exposed to 150 degree water for two seconds. Burns will also occur with a six-second exposure to 140 degree water or with a thirty second exposure to 130 degree water. Even if the temperature is 120 degrees, a five minute exposure could result in third-degree burns. This is very concerning, as children and **especially infants have much more thin, delicate skin that will burn even faster** than the cited statistics below.



Practice Tip:

When investigating allegations of abuse involving immersion scald burns, inquire as to how long the child was exposed to the hot water. Run the hot water in the household to determine what temperature it will rise to and how long it takes to reach a high temperature.

¹ Renz BM, Sherman R. Child abuse by scalding. *J Med Assoc Ga.* 1992 Oct;81(10):574-8. Review.

² Rosenberg NM, Marino D. Frequency of suspected abuse/neglect in burn patients. *Pediatr Emerg Care.* 1989 Dec;5(4):219-21.

³ Purdue GF, Hunt JL, Prescott PR. Child abuse by burning--an index of suspicion. *J Trauma.* 1988 Feb;28(2):221-4.