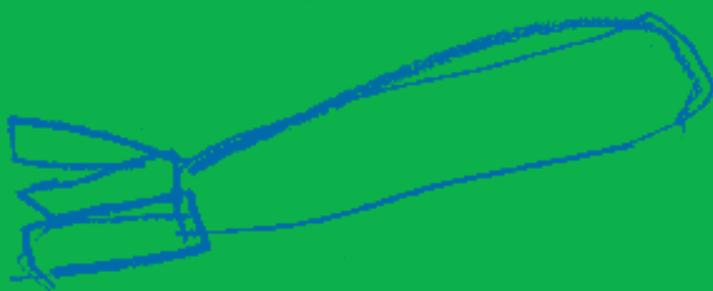


# Kitchen safety



The Royal Children's Hospital Safety Centre, Melbourne 2008

The kitchen is a common site for many children's injuries occurring inside the house. Paying attention to a number of areas in the kitchen can help prevent injuries.

## Kitchen design and organisation

- Consider a safety gate at the entrance to the kitchen to prevent access when cooking.
- Make sure corners at a child's height are rounded or padded.
- Use child resistant locks on cupboards, especially those containing detergents and dishwasher tablets, powder or liquid, cleaning products or other poisons.
- Never put poisons in food or drink containers. Poisons should be kept in their original containers and clearly labelled.
- Position all electrical outlets close to the bench surface where the appliances will be used.
- Make sure that drawers or cupboards with knives, scissors, matches and lighters have child resistant locks fitted.
- Building regulations state that every home in Victoria must have a smoke alarm complying with Australian Standard AS 3786. It is recommended that the smoke alarms be placed outside bedrooms, and not in the kitchen. Smoke alarms to be checked weekly and batteries to be replaced annually.
- Install smoke alarms near the entrance to the kitchen. Check regularly and replace batteries annually.
- Design the stove and the sink to be close to each other – this minimises carrying of hot food and possible scalds. Have benches on either side of the stove to avoid the need to carry hot food and liquids.
- Items that are used frequently should be stored in easy reach and at a convenient height, preferably between shoulder and hip height.

## Electrical safety

- Switch off and unplug appliances after use.
- Replace any damaged plugs or frayed electrical cords.
- Avoid extension cords and double adaptors – a safety power board is better.
- Fit plastic power point protectors to electrical outlets when not in use.
- Keep appliances away from the sink area and do not use appliances or power points with wet hands.
- Ask an electrician to install safety switches. These can cut power off quickly to avoid accidental electrocution.

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## Microwave safety

- Make sure the microwave is out of reach of children.
- Food and liquids heated in the microwave can reach scalding temperatures very quickly. The heat is often uneven so it is important to shake or stir the contents before serving.
- Always check the temperature of the food or liquid before serving.
- Avoid glass bottles and containers as they may crack or even explode when heated in the microwave.
- Warm up a baby's bottle without the teat or cap. If the bottle feels warm to touch, then the contents are probably too hot for baby.
- Test the temperature of the milk by pouring a few drops on the inside of the wrist; it should feel just warm on the skin.
- When food is heated or cooked in a covered container, steam that can scald is trapped inside. Remove the lid or plastic covering from the far side of the container so steam rises away from you.

## Preventing burns and scalds

Avoid long dangling cords on electric kettles and other appliances; use short or curly cords or a cordless jug.

### Hotplates

Use the back burners or hot plates whenever possible.

### Pots and saucepans

Turn handles away from the edge of the stove.

### Stove

Use a stove guard to protect young children from scalds.

### Hot drinks

Keep hot drinks away from children and never have a child on your lap while you have a hot drink.

### Table

Put all hot liquids and food in the centre of the table and away from the edges.

### Tablecloths

Children can pull the edge of the tablecloth and pull hot fluids over themselves. Use non-slip place mats instead.

### Playpen

When busy in the kitchen, use a playpen or safety gate to avoid the child getting underfoot.

### Hot water

Turn down the temperature of the hot water delivered in bathrooms to 50 degrees to avoid scalding.

## Preventing falls and cuts

- Make sure that children are not able to open drawers or cupboards where knives, scissors or other sharp objects are kept.
- Ensure that floors have a non-slip surface.
- Wipe up spills immediately.
- Avoid changes in floor level.
- Use sturdy household steps for high and hard to reach cupboards or storage – never stand on a chair.
- Keep children's toys out of the kitchen – they are easy to trip over.
- Throw away chipped and cracked glasses and crockery.

For further information  
about the Safety Centre  
Telephone 9345 5085  
[www.rch.org.au/safetycentre](http://www.rch.org.au/safetycentre)

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