

Kitchen Safety

General kitchen safety:

1. Kitchens should have a fire extinguisher coded for kitchen fires and a smoke alarm should be located in or near the kitchen. Have a fire exit plan discussed with your family so they know what to do in case a fire occurs.
2. Children, and adults, should always walk in the kitchen.
3. Wear shoes that cover the whole foot, not sandals. Wear clothes that cover most of the body but not long sleeves or baggy clothes which can catch fire.
4. Tie back hair to keep it out of food and out of flames. If hair is short, wear a clean hat.
5. Teach children the dangers in the kitchen. Explain to them what is sharp, hot, etc. Tell them the kitchen is not place for “rough housing” or “horseplay”. They need to pay close attention to each kitchen task they perform.
6. Demonstrate how all the kitchen equipment works. However, use good judgment when deciding what is safe for your child to do at their particular age. Children progress at different rates so there are no set rules on when a child can perform a particular task.
7. Have children learn first on non-electrical equipment, like a hand beater, before they progress to electric equipment.
8. Have children use metal or plastic utensils, measuring cups and bowls that won't break if they fall.

Allowing a child to use the stove is a huge responsibility for the child and you. There are many dangers present when using a stove. Only when a child is mature and responsible should they be able to operate/cook on a stove. Adult supervision is always required.

Stove Dangers:

1. Electric burners stay hot long after the burner has been turned off.
2. Loose fitting clothes could drape over a burner and catch on fire.
3. Cooking produces steam that can burn skin when removing the lid.
4. Frying food causes hot fat to spatter and can burn the skin and eyes if the pan is not properly covered with a spatter lid.
5. Handles on pots and pans can catch on clothes or get in the way causing the pan to get knocked on the floor so the liquids spill and could cause burns.
6. Use dry pot holders when handling hot pans and pots.
7. Keep pan handles turned away from the edge of the table or stove. Only fill pans half to three-fourths full so they can be moved safely.

Deep fryer dangers: Deep fryers are never safe for children and children should be removed from the kitchen when they are in use.

Microwave oven dangers:

1. Microwave ovens appear to be safer to use than stoves and regular ovens. However, there are many dangers associated with using a microwave for cooking.

2. Some microwaves are dangerous to turn on when empty. Make sure your child understands this.
3. Use only microwave-safe cookware. Containers not specifically for microwave cooking can melt in the microwave. It is not safe to eat food that has had its container break down (melt, burn) during the cooking process.
4. Food coming out of the microwave can be very hot even if it does not look like it.
5. Microwaves cook unevenly so certain areas of the food may be hotter than others.
6. Take care when serving the food so a child does not burned by a "hot-spot". Stir foods or mix foods well before serving.

Toaster dangers:

1. Keep the toaster away from curtains, paper towels or anything that could catch on fire.
2. Food can get stuck in a toaster. Always unplug a toaster before trying to remove stuck food to avoid electrical shock. Adults should perform this task. This is not a task for a child.
3. Toasters and/or the food inside them can catch on fire. Teach your child to tell an adult immediately if they see a fire in the toaster.

Knives and other sharp hand tool dangers:

1. Knives should be sharp; dull knives can lead to accidents.
2. Children should learn to hold knives properly with the fingers of their dominant hand securely gripping the knife handle and the fingers of their other hand curled under as they hold the food. Curling the fingers under ensures they don't get chopped off.
3. Graters, zesters, microplanes and peelers (parers) are sharp, too. Children should not use these utensils until they are old enough (usually around age 9 or 10 years) to learn to use them properly. Adult supervision is needed when knives and other sharp hand tools are in use.
4. Always pick up a knife by its handle and never try to catch a falling knife.
5. Put dirty knives on the counter or drain board, never in a sink full of water.

In case of fire:

- If a pot of food catches fire, don't move it.
- Try to slide a lid over it slowly. The lid will snuff the fire out, by taking away the oxygen it needs to breathe. Leave the lid on the pot.
- Now turn off the element under the pot.
- Never throw water on a pot of food. Water can make the fire spread, especially if any oil or grease is present.
- If the fire is too big to quickly extinguish this way, get out of the house right away. Call 911 from a neighbor's home.
- If there is a fire extinguisher it should be operated by an adult.