

Cooking Safety

Many families gather in the kitchen to spend time together, but it can be one of the most hazardous rooms in the house if you don't practice safe cooking behaviors. It's a recipe for a serious injury or even death to wear loose clothing (especially hanging sleeves), walk away from a cooking pot on the stove or leave flammable materials, such as potholders or paper towels around the stove.

Choose the right equipment and use it properly: Always use cooking equipment tested and approved by a recognized testing facility. Follow manufacturer's instructions and code requirements when installing and operating cooking equipment. Plug microwave ovens and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance.

Watch what you heat: The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking. Stay in the kitchen if you are frying, grilling or boiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove. Stay alert! If you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy, you won't be alert! Microwaved food can be dangerously hot. Remove the lid or other covering from microwaved food slowly, away from the face. Hot steam escaping from a container of microwaved food or the food itself can cause burns.

Keep things that can catch fire and heat sources apart: Keep anything that can catch fire, such as pot holders, oven mitts, food packaging, towels, curtains, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags – away from the stovetop. Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire if it comes into contact with a gas flame or electric burner.

Protect children from scalds and burns: Young children are at high risk of being burned by hot foods and liquids. Keep children away from cooking areas by enforcing a "Kid Free Zone" of 3 feet around the cooking area. When children are present, use the stove's back burners or if using front burners, turn handles inward, so children can't reach up and grab them or knock them over. Never hold a child while cooking, drinking or carrying hot foods or liquids. When children are old enough, make cooking enjoyable and teach them to cook safely.

How and when to fight cooking fires: When in doubt, JUST GET OUT! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 9-1-1 from outside the house or from a neighbor's house. If a grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan (making sure you are wearing an oven mitt). By placing the lid on the pan, you are removing 1 of 3 elements a fire needs to survive – oxygen. Next turn off the burner, which removes the second element a fire needs to survive – oxygen. Do not try to move the pan! Keep the pan on the stove with the cover on until it is completely cool.

Smoke alarms and nuisance smoke alarms: If a smoke alarm sounds during normal cooking, press the pause button. Open a door or window, or fan the area with a towel to get the air moving. DO NOT DISABLE THE SMOKE ALARM OR TAKE OUT THE BATTERIES! Practice fire escape plans with your family so if you were to have a fire emergency, family members know the safest way out. Also, have a place the meet outside the house to do a family head count.

