

HOW HOT IS YOUR TAP WATER?

Hot tap water is a common cause of serious burns for children. You can protect your child from a serious injury by controlling the temperature of your hot water.

Scalds: What are they?

A scald is a second-degree burn caused by hot liquid or steam. Although scalds caused by hot coffee, tea or hot foods are more common, hot tap water scalds of children are often more severe.

Children are more at risk for tap water scalds because:

- a child's skin is thinner, more sensitive and burns more quickly than an adult's.*
- children cannot move away from the hot water quickly.*

Most hot tap water burns happen in the home when children are in the bath. Water that is too hot will cause a deep burn, covering a large portion of the body. These severe burns often require repeated surgeries and painful skin grafts over many years.

Preventing hot tap water scalds is easier than you think.

Most Canadian hot water tanks are pre-set to a temperature of 60°C or 140°F. Water this hot can severely scald a child's skin in just seconds.

To prevent tap water scalds, the hot water at your faucet should be no higher than 49°C or 120°F.

Step 1 – Find out how hot your water is at the faucet.

- Run the hot water for two minutes. (Wait a couple of hours before doing this test if you've been using a lot of hot water.)*

- Fill a cup with hot water from the faucet and test the temperature with a thermometer that reads high temperatures.*
- Wait 30 seconds and check the temperature.*

HOW HOT IS YOUR TAP WATER?

HOT WATER BURNS LIKE FIRE

60	Danger: 60°C or higher (140°F or higher) Your child could be badly burned in just seconds!
55	Warning: 55°C (130°F) Your child could be badly burned in 10 seconds!
49	Low Risk: 49°C (120°F) It would take 10 minutes for your child to be burned. This is NOT a safe temperature for your child's bath. It is too hot.

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If there is no thermometer card attached, call 416-338-7600.

Step 2 – Reduce your hot water temperature.

- Install temperature controls such as mixing valves at the hot water heater or on individual taps. Call your water heater rental agency or a plumber for proper installation.
- Use tap guards to block your child's access to the hot water tap. These can be found in many home improvement and child safety stores.



c) Lower the temperature of your gas or oil hot water heater to 49°C or a medium (“M”) setting, only if you live in a single dwelling home. If you choose this option, keep these things in mind:

- *DO NOT lower the temperature if you have an ELECTRIC water heater. Talk to a qualified plumber, the manufacturer or the water heater rental agency.*
- *DO NOT lower the hot water heater if anyone in your home smokes, is over 50 years old, or has health conditions such as:*
 - chronic lung and kidney disease;
 - diabetes
 - a weakened immune system or is taking immuno-suppressive drugs;
 - HIV/AIDS;
 - cancer;
 - an organ transplant.

These individuals are more at risk for Legionnaires’ disease. For more information talk to your doctor or call Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600.

- *Check the water heater manufacturer’s (or rental agency’s) instructions before turning the dial on your tank.*
- *GAS and OIL hot water heaters have thermostat dials located on the outside of the tank. If the dial on the heater has numbers, turn it to 49°C or 120°F. If the dial has words like Hot, Medium or Vacation, turn it to the Medium (“M”) setting. DO NOT LOWER the temperature BELOW a “Medium” or 49°C setting.*
- *After resetting the dial, wait 24 hours and test your water temperature again.*
- *Water heaters may continue to pose scalding risks, even when turned down.*

A NOTE TO NEW OR RENOVATING HOMEOWNERS

On September 1, 2004, the Ontario Building Code was changed. It now states that hot water supplied to fixtures in residential occupancies shall not exceed 49°C.

TALK TO YOUR PROPERTY MANAGER OR LANDLORD

If you don’t have access to the hot water tank, speak to your property manager or landlord about installing temperature controls on your bathroom and kitchen faucets.



Tips for bathing children

Some simple steps will make tub time fun and safe for your child.

- *Never leave your child in the bath without adult supervision.*
- *Always start and finish with cold water when filling the bath.*
- *Test the temperature of the bath water with your elbow before putting your child in the bath.*
- *Face your child away from the taps to reduce the risk of the taps being turned on.*
- *Be extra careful if bathing your child in the sink. Sinks with single lever taps are easy for small children to turn.*
- *Always drain the tub immediately after the bath is finished.*

First aid for scalds

The treatment of a scald will depend on how deep the burn is and how much of the child’s body is burned.

Your child will need immediate medical attention (call 911 or your doctor) if they have been scalded and the burn is:

- *larger than half the size of the child’s palm (not including fingers) or*
- *on the child’s face, hands, feet or genital area.*

For all scald burns:

- *Immediately pour cool running water over the burn for approximately 10 minutes. Cooling the burn can reduce the damage to the skin and lessen the pain.*
- *Once cooled, gently remove wet clothing.*
- *Loosely cover the burned skin with a dry clean cloth.*
- *Never apply cream, ointment, butter, oil, ice or ice water. Cream and ointments can trap heat and cause the burn to become worse. Ice and ice water can also further harm the damaged skin.*
- *Call your doctor or Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000 about whether to seek medical attention for your child’s burn.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call the Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600 or visit our website at www.toronto.ca/health.