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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH/ DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SUPPORTS DIVISION

HEALTH ALERT

Scalding Injury ALERT !

Scalding Burn Sources:

- Hot tap water or drinks
- Hot beverages
- Hot food
- Steam

Most Frequent Scald Injury Victims:

- Young Children
- Older Adults
- People with Disabilities

Common Sites of Scald Injury:

- Bathroom:
Due to inability to remove self from hot water quickly.
- Kitchen or dining room:
Due to spills while handling or moving hot foods and liquids.

Important Points:

- Persons who are dependent on others for help are at risk.
- Limited mobility, thin skin or altered neurological response may further increase the risk and severity for scalding injuries with persons with IDD.
- Use caution when cooking or when serving or drinking hot beverages.
- Test hot water temperature and establish thermostat setting at or below 110 F [43 C].
- If the burned area is red, blistered or peeling, seek medical attention!
- Learn more at:
<http://www.ameriburn.org/>

Scalding injury occurs when contact with hot liquid or steam damages one or more layers of skin.

How Big is the Problem:

- Hot water, including tap water in bathtubs and showers, is the leading cause of both scalds and hospital admissions for burns.
- Nationwide, about 3,800 injuries and 34 deaths occur annually due to scalding from excessively hot tap water. The majority of these injuries involve the elderly, disabled and children under the age of five.
- It takes less than 3 seconds to produce a partial-thickness burn when the water temperature is 140 F [60 C]. A 120 F [49 C] would take much longer – approximately 5 minutes.
- Persons with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) may not be able to respond quickly to a situation involving contact with hot water.
- Therefore, a constant safe water temperature is essential for preventing scalds from tap water.

How can scalding be prevented in New Mexico DD Waiver Homes?

- Minimize the risk of scalding injuries by lowering the temperature of the water heater. New Mexico DOH-DDSD recommends that hot water heaters should be set at 120 F [49 C].
- Mixing valves may be installed on faucets and shower heads. This valve prevents rapid fluctuations in water temperature if another faucet is used.
- Providers are advised to monitor temperature settings on water heaters and to monitor the hot water temperature in sinks; showers and bathtubs as part of their maintenance and ongoing quality improvement process.
- Providers should check faucet controls and replace any control that may be confusing to use and might lead to an accidental burn.
- Make sure all caregivers understand faucet controls and that all faucets are clearly and accurately labeled for Hot and Cold water.
- When helping a dependent person to bathe or shower:
 - **Avoid Distractions! Don't try to multi task!**
 - **Stay focused on only helping the person to bathe or shower!**
 - **Never leave dependent persons alone on a shower trolley or in a tub!**
 - **Be sure water is turned off completely. Verify this with your hand under the spigot or shower spray.**
 - **Does your agency have a policy for monitoring and documenting hot water temperatures? If so- know it and follow it!**

Emergency Care of Scald Injury

- Remove scald victim from source and remove all wet clothing, diapers, shoes, etc.
- Cool scalded area briefly with cool water: cover with clean, dry covering.
- Do not apply creams, salves or ointments
- **Call 911 if burns are severe. Contact doctor and agency nurse immediately!**