

## WHY CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FIRE SAFETY

It's a proven fact: Teaching children about fire safety can make a lifesaving difference.

There are hundreds of stories nationwide of how children who were taught fire safety were able to save themselves during fire emergencies. Informed children are better able to "keep their cool" when fire strikes because they know what to expect and what action to take.

Equally important is educating children about how they can help to prevent fires. By learning about fire hazards, your children can reduce the risk for fire in your home.

Fire safety and prevention takes a team effort. Parents play a significant part by helping young children understand the dangers of fire and what to do if fire breaks out. The messages for children are simple and easy to teach. The result can mean the difference between life and death.



*Fire strikes more than 400,000 American homes every year.*

### SHOW THE WAY

*The most effective way to educate your children about fire is to model safe behavior. When children see you practicing fire prevention and taking care with fire hazards, they will do as you do.*

## Protect Your Children from Fire and Burns

Prevention is the best defense against fires and burn injuries. Here are steps you can take to protect your family:

- Keep lighters and matches out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home, and in hallways and bedrooms. Test them monthly and change batteries every six months.
- Replace all frayed, cracked or broken electrical cords and plugs.
- Avoid overloading outlets with too many plugs. Use a power strip with a circuit breaker instead.
- Make sure there are two unblocked escape routes from every room.
- Keep towels, potholders and other flammable materials away from your kitchen stovetop.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Unplug small appliances when not in use.
- Never leave a hot iron, blow drier or curling iron unattended.
- Place lit candles safely out of the reach of children and away from curtains or other flammable materials.
- Blow candles out every time you leave a room or the house.
- Make sure your fireplace has a screen or spark arrestor in place before using it.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet from furniture, drapes or other flammable materials.
- If you smoke, never do so in bed.

# TEACH YOUR KIDS ABOUT FIRE SAFETY



## WHAT CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FIRE SAFETY

Fire prevention and safety education are fundamental ways to protect your children from fire danger. Explain that fire is dangerous and can harm or even kill people and pets, and damage your home and belongings. Then take the time to help your children learn what to do in case fire breaks out in your home.

Here are important fire safety concepts to teach children, presented in easy-to-remember phrases. Teach your children these rules and reinforce the messages with the suggested activities for each.

### "Do your part: Be fire smart!"

The smart thing for children to do is to stay away from anything that can start a fire or burn them—especially matches, lighters and candles. This includes the kitchen stove, fireplace, space heaters, radiators, irons and other hot appliances. Create a "safe space" rule for children: they are not to come within 3 feet of any of these items. Remind children never to place anything on top of radiators or space heaters. Tell your children you count on them to be smart about fire safety.

### "A TOOL, NOT A TOY"

*Children set more than 100,000 fires every year in the United States. Impress upon your children that matches, lighters and candles are tools, not toys, and that they are to stay away from them. Tell your children that if they see matches or a lighter lying about, they are to tell a grown-up right away.*



### "Know when to go."

Smoke detectors are proven lifesavers. Be sure your children know the sound of a smoke detector alarm and to get out fast when they hear it. Enlist your children's help in testing smoke alarms monthly and in changing the batteries twice a year.

### "Don't be scared—be prepared."

Create and practice a family home fire escape plan. Have your children help draw up a floor plan of your home showing two ways out of each room (usually a door and a window). Visit each room and have children point to the two ways out. Then have "fire drills" where everyone has to get outside from different places in the house.

### "Go straight to the meeting place."

Your family fire escape plan should designate a meeting place a safe distance from the house—such as a mailbox, tree or lamppost. Teach children to go and wait there if a fire breaks out—and never to go back inside for anything.

### "Never hide—hurry outside."

Impress upon children that they are to get out quickly when they see smoke or hear the smoke alarm. Tell them not to stop or to take anything—toys, clothes or pets.

### "See smoke, crawl low; door's hot, don't go."

In a fire, the air near the floor is fresher and cooler. Help children learn to crawl low under smoke by holding towels or sheets about 3 feet above the floor for them to make their way under. Also teach children to test a closed door before opening it. Have them practice by placing the back of a hand on the doorknob and at the crack of the door. If the door is warm, fire could be on the other side, so children should leave the door closed and use the second way out of the room.

### "Never fear firefighters in gear."

A firefighter dressed in bulky "turnout" gear, a helmet and face mask can be a frightening sight to young children. Tell children that firefighters are their friends who come to help them. Find pictures of firefighters in gear on the Internet. Better yet, take your children to visit the fire station. Call ahead to arrange a visit or watch for notices of fire station open houses.

### "Stay in control: Stop, drop and roll."

Children should know not to run if their clothes catch fire. Instead, they should stop, drop to the ground, cover their face with their hands and roll over and over until the flames are out. Have them practice this. Consider cutting "flames" out of felt and placing them on a child's clothing. Have the child roll over until these "flames" fall off.

### "Get out first, then make the call."

Children should know to call 911 to report a fire *only* from a place outside of a burning building. Play the role of an emergency dispatcher and have your children practice calling in a fire report. Ask for their name, address, what the emergency is, and other related details. Remind your children to speak slowly and clearly, and to hang up only after they are told to do so.

