

Fact Sheet

Electrical Goods



What are Electrical Goods?

Electrical goods are machines powered by a form of energy known as electricity. They are used in households to perform a range of everyday tasks, such as boiling a kettle or blow drying your hair.



How may a child be injured?

Burns

- Electric shock or electrocution can result in burns to both the skin and internal tissues. Children can be injured when biting on cords or cord sockets, placing objects such as scissors and keys into power points, placing appliances in water or flying kites and model aeroplanes near overhead power lines.

Cardiac and/or respiratory arrest

- Children can suffer cardiac and/or respiratory arrest if they receive an electric shock from a faulty electrical appliance.

Muscle, nerve and tissue damage

- Children can experience muscle, nerve and tissue damage after receiving an electric shock when accidentally coming into contact with exposed parts of electrical appliances or wiring.



How common are these injuries?



In Victoria, over the three year period 2003/4 to 2005/6, electrical goods were responsible for 84 burn injuries in children aged between 0 and 15 (0-5 years 48, 6-15 years 36).¹ There are no recent published statistics available for NSW.



Is there a Law or an Australian Standard for electrical goods?

The law, in New South Wales, states that all electrical goods sold must meet the requirements of the Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2004 and its Regulations. This legislation covers the distribution of safe electrical appliances and other electrical goods which must be tested and approved before they can be sold.² The easiest way to determine if an electrical good is approved is to see if it displays an acceptable approval mark, as shown below:



Type of approval mark	Example
State approval numbers	
New South Wales	N12345 or NSW12345
Queensland	Q011234
Victoria	V023425
South Australia	S12345
ACT	A12345
Standards Australia International (SAI) type mark	SAI TE (licence no.)
SAI Global	
Regulatory Compliance Mark (RCM). Note: may be accompanied by the supplier code (eg. N789)	

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Remember:



- The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that, where possible, you purchase an electrical appliance that meets the above mentioned requirements of the Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2004 and its Regulations.
- It is best to have a safety switch installed by a licensed electrician. A safety switch can detect faulty appliances or bad wiring and turn the power off almost immediately.
- Electrical appliances should be checked regularly for any damage. Be aware of flickering indicator lights, smoke, hot fuses and noises such as popping, fizzing, spluttering, or erratic stop-start running.
- Never try to fix a faulty appliance yourself. Have it checked by a licensed electrical contractor. Always use a licensed electrician to do any electrical work.
- Second hand electrical appliances should be thoroughly checked for safety by a registered electrical contractor, licensed electrician or reputable appliance repairer, before use.
- Teach children never to touch electrical switches with wet hands and to be careful when using electrical appliances near water. Never use an appliance that has had water spilt on it. If an appliance causes a tingling sensation while you're using it, switch it off at the power point and have it checked.
- Always switch off electrical appliances at the power point and unplug after use by pulling appliances out by the plug, rather than the cord.
- Make sure switches and power points are in good condition. They should not be cracked, broken or loose. Unused power points should be covered with safety plugs to prevent small children and infants from placing objects or fingers into sockets.
- Always replace frayed cords or damaged plugs, and unwind extension cords fully so they don't overheat. Never use home-made electrical cords or extension leads, cords which have a 3-pin plug on each end, or extension cords with only two prongs (unearthed).
- Never place electrical cords or extension leads under rugs or carpets. Pressure from people and equipment moving over cords can cause heat build up and result in a fire.
- Keep electrical cords out of reach of children. Make sure cords do not dangle over bench tops or trail on the floor.
- When using power boards, only use boards with an overload cut out switch. Appliances that heat up, such as toasters and kettles, draw more power. Running too many of these types of appliances from a standard power point could overheat power boards, creating a potential fire danger.
- Always be aware of how much current the appliances you plug into a power point draw. Power points are designed to safely deliver 10 amps. Appliances such as electric kettles, fan heaters and clothes dryers each draw 10 amps and should not be plugged into a single power point all together.³ Care should be taken, therefore, not to "piggy-back" double adaptors or stack plugs on top of each other as this may overload the power point and cause a fire.

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- Never pour water on an electrical fire. Only use a fire extinguisher designed for electrical fires or a fire blanket.
- Do not leave appliances such as hair dryers and portable heaters in the bathroom (children have been electrocuted by pulling hair dryers into baths even though the hair dryer was switched off).
- Do not put electric blankets on children's beds, especially if they are still in nappies or wet the bed.
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that you check for products that have been recalled (www.recalls.gov.au) prior to buying or borrowing an item for use with your child.

¹ Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit, 2007.

² <http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/corporate/publications/fte26safeelectricalgoods.html>

³ Westernpower, *Electrical Safety Kit for Schools*

<http://www.worldofenergy.com.au/pdf/Shock%20Proof%20booklet.pdf>