

Fact Sheet

Stoves, Ovens and Microwave Ovens



What are stoves and ovens?

Stoves and ovens refer to pieces of equipment in the kitchen which produce heat for cooking purposes.

Microwave ovens are “ovens in which food is cooked by the heat produced by the absorption of microwave energy by water molecules in the food.”¹



How may a child be injured?

Burns

- Children can sustain burns when they have access to the kitchen while others are cooking.
- Young children can be burnt when they pull saucepans down and spill the hot contents over themselves.
- Young children can be burnt when they pull food or liquid out of the microwave and spill the hot contents over themselves.
- Young children can be burnt when they touch stove hot plates.
- Young children can be burnt when they touch hot oven doors.
- Some upright stoves are unstable and if not fixed properly, it may tip over when a child stands on the door, spill the hot food or liquids onto the child.
- Microwave ovens heat food to a very high temperature, and often food is heated unevenly.
- When removing food from a microwave, the steam from heated food and liquid can burn when it escapes.



How common are these injuries?

In recent years (1999-00 to 2003-04), young children have had the highest rates of hospital admissions due to burns in Australia. During this period, 12,159 cases involved children less than 4 years old.² The majority of these injuries occurred in the home and are largely due to hot drinks, foods, fats and cooking oils, and hot tap water.

The number of children presenting to The Children’s Hospital at Westmead with contact burns as a result of touching hot oven doors are below (this does not include children standing on the oven door tipping it or touching the stove tops):

Year	No. of Children
2007	38
2006	33
2005	25
2004	16
2003	22




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Is there a Law or an Australian Standard for stoves, ovens and microwave ovens?

According to the NSW Office of Fair Trading³ all mains supplied electrical appliances and equipment electrical sold in NSW 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. Microwave Ovens and Ranges (stoves, ovens) are included in this. The NSW Office of Fair Trading provides the following examples of acceptable electrical safety approval marks in NSW.

Type of approval mark	Example
NSW Approval Number	NSW12345
Interstate Approval Numbers	Q011234, V023425
Regulatory Compliance (RCM)	
International Testing & Certification Services Pty Ltd (ACN 098 886 563)	A/number/EA
SAI Global Certification Services Pty Ltd (ACN 108 716 669)	SAI TE EA number SAI SMK EA number
SGS Systems and Services Certification Pty Ltd (ACN 060 156 014)	SGSEA number
The Australian Gas Association (ACN 004 206 044)	AGA number EA

Remember:

- The Children's Hospital at Westmead recommend that you use a barrier to keep young children out of the kitchen when cooking.
- Use the back stove elements to cook.
- Turn saucepan handles to the back.
- Install a stove guard to stop children reaching pans and hotplates.
- Install an oven door guard to stop children from touching hot oven doors.
- Make sure that upright stoves are stable and fixed properly to the wall.



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- After heating food in the microwave, open lids or plastic wrap so the steam rises away from you.
- Carefully stir food after it has been in the microwave to make sure it is heated evenly.
- It is possible to super-heat some liquids or foods beyond their natural boiling point. If this happens, the super heated liquids may boil suddenly or even explode when jolted or stirred after removal from the oven. To avoid this, cover the food or liquid or allow it to cool before removing from the microwave.⁴ Don't heat water in the microwave for too long. Don't put your face or body over the container and keep the container at a safe distance when you add things to it for the first time such as a teabag.
- Test the temperature of the food that has been heated in a microwave to make sure it is safe to serve.
- Do not heat baby bottles in the microwave.

¹ Merriam-Webster, Incorporated (2007) Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microwave+oven> (accessed 26th March 2008).

² Harrison, J and Steel, D. (2006) *Burns and Scalds*. AIHW cat. no. INJCAT 92 Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

³ NSW Office of Fair Trading. *Safe Electrical Goods*. Available:

<http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/corporate/publications/fte26safeelectricalgoods.html> (accessed 26th March 2008).

⁴ Commonwealth of Australia: Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (2009). *Radiation Emissions from Microwave Ovens*. Available:

http://www.arpansa.gov.au/radiationprotection/FactSheets/is_Microwave.cfm (accessed 24th April 2009).