

## Temperature Of Water Is Key To Child Safety

Turning Down Heat Can Save Money, Too

); } //  
Advertisement

By Gary Dymski

Newsday

Saturday, February 9, 2008; F14

It was days before the baby girl would turn a year old, and her grandmother was giving her a bath. The phone rang. Grandma took but a minute to answer the call.

In that instant, the baby from an [Atlanta](#) suburb tried pulling herself up using the hot-water handle on the tub faucet. The faucet opened, and she was scalded by 140-degree water, resulting in third-degree burns over most of her body. She was airlifted to a hospital, but died less than a week later.

"That story just got to me," says Meri-K Appy, president of the Home Safety Council, which recently released results of a survey on injuries from hot tap water. "After the survey results, I guess I'm surprised that more accidents don't happen. It's amazing how so few of us think about being burned by our tap water."

According to a study by Kelton Research on behalf of HotStop, a maker of anti-scalding products, and the national nonprofit Home Safety Council, about 3,800 injuries and 34 deaths occur in the home annually because of scalding from hot tap water.

Nearly 80 percent of the parents surveyed said they had not checked their water heaters for a safe temperature setting (120 degrees).

It's an oversight, of course. Who would think household tap water could be so harmful, even deadly? Certainly not that [Georgia](#) grandmother in 2002.

Appy says that's one of the problems. "One way to reduce the risk is to simply adjust the thermostat on your water heater," Appy says. "Most heaters have adjustable thermostats, and dialing it down to 120 degrees can prevent some of these accidents."

Studies show that tap water at 140 degrees can burn skin in just seconds. At 120 degrees, burning can take up to five minutes.

Most prone to scalding are infants and older adults, whose skin often is softer. In addition to lessening the risk of scalding, lowering the water heater thermostat from 140 degrees to 120 degrees can save almost 70 percent on water heating costs.

It is important that hot tap water be set at 120 degrees to eliminate bacteria. After dialing down the temperature, test the water with a thermometer. If necessary, adjust the thermostat again to maintain hot water at 120 degrees.

Appy says other minor steps also can be taken, including running the cold water before turning on the hot water.

"I know a lot of us are used to turning on the hot water first, then adjusting the temperature at the faucet by turning on the cold water," she says. "Just do it the other way around, so the hot water doesn't rush out."

## Other safety tips:

• Test tub water using your own skin. Reach into the water up to your elbow before placing the child into the tub. If the water is too hot for your forearm, it will be too hot for the child.

• Keep children within arm's reach when they're bathing. Never leave them alone.

• Even when using the tub, turn on cold water first, then adjust tap temperature by turning on the hot water.

The tap-water study also showed that only 4 percent of adults surveyed had installed an anti-scald device.

"That was very surprising," Appy says, "because many of the new devices are inexpensive and can be easy to install."

While it does not commonly endorse products, Appy says the Home Safety Council is encouraging installation of HotStop anti-scald faucets, tub spouts and showerheads.

Available at home improvement warehouses for between \$24 and \$39, these devices can be easily installed by the average adult -- how hard is it to hand-tighten a new shower head? -- and will instantly reduce the flow of water to a trickle when it reaches unsafe temperatures.

"It's so easy, and in this case inexpensive, to prevent scalding," Appy says. "The main thing about the survey, however, is how few of us are aware of the dangers."

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

### Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

© 2008 The Washington Post Company



#### real estate featured advertisers

- **Toll Brothers - America's Luxury Home Builder**
- **Build Your Lifestyle With Your New Stanley Martin Home.**
- **Brookfield Homes, where design is the difference.**
- **Find the perfect home in the perfect location with Bozzuto Homes.**
- **At Ladysmith Village, Home is Much Bigger than Your House.**
- **Fine Urban Living - PN Hoffman New Condos in DC & VA**
- **Brand New Condos Throughout The Metro Area - Kettler Condos**
- **Centex Homes - Over 50 years of better built & better value - Enjoy Life!**