

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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BURN AWARENESS WEEK HIGHLIGHTS PREVENTION

DALLAS – February 7, 2000 – Burns injure 1.25 million people each year, but doctors say common sense and planning could prevent many of those injuries.

Burn Awareness Week is Feb. 6 through 12, and doctors at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas recommend using the week to check smoke detectors and brush up on burn safety.

Dr. Gary Purdue, professor of burn/trauma/critical care at UT Southwestern, co-directs the burn unit at Parkland Memorial Hospital. The world-renowned Regional Burn Center admitted 600 acute burn patients in 1998 and is a national leader in treating burn injuries.

“Almost all burns happen because somebody was doing something their mother told them not to do,” Purdue said. “A little forethought can prevent most burns.”

If you do get burned, run cold tap water over the affected skin for less than a minute. Wrap the burn in something dry, and visit your doctor if the burn is large.

Here are a few ways to keep safe from burns:

CANDLES

“Nobody used to have candles around their homes,” Purdue said. “Now, many people have them around, and we are seeing more burn injuries from them.”

Candles should only be used if they are placed away from any kind of fabric or flammable substance. Candles also should not be moved while burning or hot since the hot wax can also cause a serious burn, Purdue said.

“Of course, the best way to prevent candle burns is to not use them,” said Purdue, who is also an assistant professor of anesthesiology and pain management.

SMOKE DETECTORS

Smoke detectors should be installed on each floor of your home, and the batteries should be changed every year.

“Working smoke detectors could prevent many burns as well as save lives,” Purdue said. “The first few minutes of a fire are vital, and a smoke alarm can save your life.”

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KITCHEN

"The kitchen is still the most common place to be burned," Purdue said. "Children should never be in the kitchen while you are cooking."

There are several ways to make your kitchen safer, Purdue said. Turn the handles of your pots and pans to face inward on the stove, and never allow your children near hot liquids that can easily be spilled or knocked over.

Avoid wearing loose-fitting clothing while cooking. Keep your kitchen and cooking areas well-lit, and never leave cooking food unattended.

FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS

Keep flammable liquids in appropriate containers and follow the directions on the package. Store flammable liquids away from combustible materials like rags or newspapers, and be cautious while using flammable liquids.

"It may seem obvious not to wash tar or paint off your skin with gasoline, but people do it," Purdue said. "By following the safety tips on the containers, burn injuries should not happen."

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