

Give Your Child the Gift of Safety this Holiday Season

Keep your holidays injury-free with important kitchen safety tips from Safe Kids Columbus

Columbus, GA - As the holiday season approaches, cooking as a family is a great way to make lasting memories. Children can safely help out in the kitchen too, but parents must pick the right tasks for each child's age and skill level.

"Parents and caregivers should check for preventable hazards before their children enter the kitchen, and they should supervise their children at all times while they're in the kitchen," says Christy Hubbard, Safe Kids Columbus coordinator. "Simply being in the same room as a child is not necessarily supervising. An actively supervised child is in sight and in reach *at all times*."

Burns, such as those from spills, steam, hot surfaces or a flame, can be especially devastating injuries. Young children have thinner skin than adults do, and therefore burn more severely and at lower temperatures. "Thermal burns from contact with a hot surface or a flame cause the greatest number of burns in children," adds Hubbard. "However, children ages 4 and under are hospitalized in burn centers more for scald burns from hot liquids, while children ages 5 to 15 are hospitalized more for fire and flame burns."

Children who can follow directions may be ready to help out in the kitchen with tasks that do not involve knives, appliances or heat. "You know your own children. Don't give them knives or let them handle anything hot until they have shown the maturity and coordination to do it safely," says Christy Hubbard. "Some children mature faster than others, so it's up to parents to use good judgment about each child's capabilities."

Here are some guidelines for kitchen activities that children of certain ages may be ready to handle:

Children between 3 and 5 can:

- Get ingredients out of the refrigerator and cupboards.
- Stir ingredients together in a bowl.
- Pour liquids into a bowl.
- Rinse foods under cold water.
- Use a cookie cutter to cut out shapes in dough.

Children between 6 and 8 can:

- Use a butter knife to spread frosting, peanut butter or soft cheese.
- Peel vegetables.
- Measure ingredients.
- Stir together ingredients in a bowl.
- Set the table.

Children between 9 and 12 can:

- Begin to follow recipes.
- Use electrical kitchen appliances such as blenders, food processors, electric mixers and microwaves.
- Help plan the meals.
- Open cans.
- Squeeze garlic from a garlic press and use a grater to shred cheese and vegetables.
- Turn stove burners on and off and select oven temperature when an adult is present.

Children older than age 13 can:

- Operate the stovetop without adult supervision.
- Drain cooked pasta into a colander.
- Remove a tray of cookies from the oven.
- Heat food in the microwave without adult supervision

For more information about preventing airway obstruction, call (706) 321-6183 or visit www.safekidscolumbusga.com. Safe Kids Columbus works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Its members include public safety agencies, teachers, EMTs, county commissioners, health educators, nurses, civic groups, faith-based organizations, public health organizations, local government, and many others concerned about the well being of our children. Safe Kids Columbus is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Columbus was founded in 1998 and is led by the Columbus Health Department.