

Don't fry yourself when you deep-fry the Thanksgiving turkey

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Thanksgiving Day has more than double the number of home cooking fires than an average day, according to the U.S. Fire Administration. More than 4,000 fires occur annually on Thanksgiving Day as celebrants deep-fry turkeys, boil potatoes, bake pies and more.

"Cooking remains a major mechanism of injuries for [adults](#), and for children who are underfoot," said Dr. Richard L. Gamelli, director of the Burn & Shock Trauma Research Institute, director of the Burn Unit and senior vice president and provost of the Health Sciences Division at Loyola University Chicago.

The recent trend of deep-frying the turkey has prompted an increase in injuries. In the United States, more than 141 serious fires and hot-oil burns have been reported from turkey fryers over the last decade, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Serafino Alfe of suburban Chicago knows how dangerous it can be. He was deep-frying [turkeys](#) for an annual fundraiser dinner a few years ago and ended up at the Loyola Burn Center with third-degree burns—the worst—on his leg.

"I tripped and fell right into the deep fryer," he said. "Thirty quarts of hot oil poured over my leg and I basically fried myself."

Alfe said he has used a deep fryer for many years and is always careful. "We put the deep fryers on cardboard and I caught my shoe on the edge

and just lost my balance," said Alfe, who underwent surgery at Loyola on his injured leg the day before Thanksgiving in 2011. "We were using the older fryers that do not have a secure lid and the gallons of hot oil just splattered out everywhere."

In addition to the pain of these types of injuries, an estimated \$15 million in U.S. property damage is caused by deep-fryer fires.

"It doesn't matter if it is a turkey fryer or a conventional oven, you should always take great care when using appliances, vehicles and any other device that has the potential to cause great harm to yourself and others if used in a careless, irresponsible manner," Gamelli said.

- If you're planning to use a turkey fryer, Gamelli offers these safety tips:
- Look for the newer fryers with sealed lids to prevent oil spills.
- Keep the fryer in full view while the burner is on.
- Keep children and pets away from the cooking area.
- Place the fryer in an open area away from all walls, fences or other structures.
- Never use the fryer in, on or under a garage, breezeway, carport, porch, deck or any other structure that can catch fire.
- Make sure the turkey is dry when placed in the hot oil. Slowly raise and lower the turkey to reduce hot-oil splatter and to avoid burns.
- Never [cook](#) in short sleeves, shorts or bare feet. Cover all bare skin when dunking or removing bird.
- Protect your eyes with goggles or glasses.
- Immediately turn off the fryer if the oil begins to overheat.
- Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and be careful with marinades. Oil and water don't mix and water can cause oil to spill over, creating a fire or even an explosion.
- Don't overfill fryer with oil. Turkey fryers can ignite in seconds

after oil hits the burner.

- Keep a fire extinguisher appropriate for oil fires close at hand and be familiar with how to operate it.
- Do not use a hose in an attempt to douse a [turkey fryer fire](#).
- If you do burn yourself, or someone else is burned, seek immediate medical attention.

"With some careful preparation, all can gather around the table and enjoy the Thanksgiving dinner they prepared themselves, rather than spending it as a patient in the hospital [burn](#) center," Gamelli said. Loyola's Burn Center is one of the busiest in the Midwest, treating nearly 600 patients annually in the hospital and another 3,500 patients each year in its clinic.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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