

Burn injuries take devastating toll on nation's children

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The approach of winter season brings with it an increase in burn-related injuries to our nation's children. Annually in the United States, fires and burns result in almost 4,000 deaths and more than 745,000 non-hospitalized injuries among all age groups.

A new study conducted by researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, concludes that burn-associated injuries among children and adolescents in the U.S. may be a more significant public health concern than previously estimated. The study, published in the November issue of the *Journal of Burn Care and Rehabilitation*, estimates there are approximately 10,000 pediatric (18-years-old and younger) burn injuries annually in the U.S., resulting in almost \$212 million in hospital inpatient charges.

"Burns are a major source of pediatric death and disability and are associated with significant national healthcare resource utilization," said study senior author Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, and faculty member at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. "Burns often require long periods of rehabilitation, multiple skin grafts and extensive physical therapy. Not only can burn-related injuries leave patients with lifelong physical and psychological disabilities, they often also result in significant burdens for the patients' families and caregivers."

The study found that children 2-years-old or younger were more likely to

be hospitalized for burns to their hands or wrists and from contact with hot liquids or objects, compared with children 3 to 17-years-old who were more likely to be burned by fire. Children 2 years of age and younger accounted for half of the children hospitalized for burns, and almost two-thirds of hospitalized children were male. The average length of hospital stay was 7 days with an average inpatient hospital charge of \$21,800.

“Findings from our study underscore the importance of promoting known strategies that are effective in preventing burns among children,” said Smith. “Examples include the installation and maintenance of residential smoke alarms, residential sprinkler systems, developing and practicing an escape plan in case of a fire, anti-scald devices on faucets, limiting water heater temperature and child-resistant cigarette lighters.”

This is the first study to analyze patient and injury characteristics associated with pediatric burn hospitalizations utilizing a nationally representative sample. Data for the study were obtained from the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project Kids’ Inpatient Database.

Source: Nationwide Children's Hospital

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