

Space heater safety tips can help prevent burns, fires

March 9 2013



Experts give advice on where to place, how to use devices.

(HealthDay)—Many Americans use space heaters to provide extra warmth during winter, but they can cause burns and fires if not used properly, an expert warns.

"Every year we receive patients who are victims of house fires caused by space heaters," Dr. Richard Gamelli, director of the Burn and Shock Trauma Institute at Loyola University Medical Center in Chicago, said in a Loyola news release. "So many of these injuries are preventable if simple precautions are taken," he added.

Each year in the United States, space heaters cause more than 25,000 residential fires, more than 300 deaths, and more than 6,000 burn injuries that require emergency department care, according to the U.S. Consumer [Product Safety Commission](#).

Loyola and the U.S. Department of Energy offer the following space heater safety tips:

- Don't place space heaters on carpets or rugs. Keep heaters at least 3 feet away from furniture, curtains and bedding, and other combustible material.
- Place space heaters on a hard, level surface where a child or family pet cannot brush up against them. Never leave a space heater on when an adult is not in the room.
- Never keep flammable liquids near a space heater.
- Electric space heaters are the safest type of space heater for the home. Plug them directly into a wall outlet. If an extension cord is needed, use a heavy-duty cord of 14-gauge wire or larger.
- Buy a unit with a tip-over safety switch, to shut off the [heating element](#) if the heater falls over.
- Do not use unvented combustion space heaters inside your home because they can produce dangerous emissions such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide. Vented units that are sealed combustion heaters are safer because they are less likely to backdraft and harm [indoor air quality](#). They are more efficient because they do not draw in heated air from the room and exhaust it to the outdoors.
- When using a combustion space heater, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for fueling and use only the approved fuel. Never fill a heater that is hot. Never overfill a heater; instead, allow room for fuel expansion. Store fuel outdoors.

More information: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has more about [space heater safety](#).

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Citation: Space heater safety tips can help prevent burns, fires (2013, March 9) retrieved 19 September 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-03-space-heater-safety.html>

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