

Play it safe cooking the Thanksgiving feast

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Risk of fire, burns high during the holiday, expert warns.

(HealthDay)—While cooking your Thanksgiving feast this Thursday, remember that the risk of fire and burns is high during the holiday, an expert says.

"Thanksgiving for many means extra people in the kitchen, close proximity to [fire](#) and hot surfaces, added stress to cook many dishes on a tight schedule, the manipulation of a large, heavy turkey and the use of sharp knives," Dr. Arthur Sanford, a burn surgeon at Loyola University Health System in Chicago, said in a university news release.

"It is easy to get distracted and injuries can occur in a flash," he said.

Each Thanksgiving, there are more than 4,000 fires nationwide, according to the U.S. Fire Administration.

One way to avoid becoming such a statistic is to never drink alcohol while cooking, Sanford advised.

"Intoxication and cooking injuries to adults are terrible, and often children are also victims and that is truly tragic," he said.

One major danger is turkey fryers, which have caused more than 141 serious fires and hot oil burns over the last decade, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Sanford advised using newer fryers that have sealed lids to prevent oil spills; keeping the fryer in full view while the burner is on; only using the fryer outdoors in an open area away from all walls, fences or other structures; and keeping children and pets away from the cooking area.

Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and is dry when placed in the hot oil, slowly raise and lower the turkey to reduce hot oil splatter, and turn the fryer off immediately if the oil begins to overheat, he added.

And keep a fire extinguisher appropriate for oil fires nearby and know how to use it. Never use a garden hose in an attempt to douse a [turkey fryer](#) fire, Sanford said.

Never cook while wearing short sleeves, shorts or in bare feet, he warned. Cover all bare skin when dunking or removing the turkey. Use long-sleeved oven mitts rather than pot holders, and wear goggles or glasses to protect your eyes.

If you or someone suffers a burn, seek immediate medical attention, Sanford said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers tips for the [safe preparation of your holiday meal](#).

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