



Follow safety measures around outdoor fires to prevent injury

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Steve Schering, Staff Writer

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As the weather turns cooler, families may be looking forward to spending an evening around a firepit or campfire. Before lighting a fire, parents and caregivers should take precautions to keep children safe.

As backyard firepits and fire tables become more popular, more children are getting burned, said Michael R. Flaherty, D.O., FAAP, a pediatric critical care doctor and director of the Injury Free Coalition for Kids at MassGeneral for Children in Boston.

Children can be burned by flames, by touching hot surfaces or by falling into a firepit where ashes remain hot, Dr. Flaherty said.

To make sure everyone stays safe, parents should follow these tips from the U.S. Fire Administration and Children's Wisconsin Safety Center.

- Scrape away grass and needles within a diameter of 10 feet from the fire.
- Have water nearby before building a fire.
- Never use a flammable liquid (especially gasoline) to start a fire or hot coals.
- Always supervise children around fires.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Wear snug-fitting or short-sleeved shirts and avoid sandals or open-toed shoes while cooking on a fire.
- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby.
- Don't let kids play around a firepit or fire table that has been used recently. Coals can stay hot for more than 24 hours after a fire is extinguished.

Campfires should be set up at least 25 feet away from tents, shrubs and anything that can burn. Outdoor fireplaces and firepits should be at least 10 feet away from your home. If possible, put a metal screen over wood-burning fires to keep sparks from floating out.

Dr. Flaherty suggests using firepits where flames can be contained. He also recommends drawing a "circle of safety" at least 3 feet around a fire and telling children to not cross that line.

When you are done with the fire, let the wood burn to ash, if possible. Stir the ashes and embers with a shovel. Pour water on the fire until the hissing sound stops.

If a child is burned, remove clothing immediately, apply cool water compresses to the area and call 911.

For more information about fire safety, visit <https://bit.ly/3L18YKN>.

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