

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 Monday 22nd June 2009

Rise in burns to children puts heat on modern Scottish home

Most parents think of electrical sockets and irons when asked about dangers to young children in the home but, unknown to parents, modern home gadgets such as hair straighteners are posing a growing threat to toddlers' safety.

Figures revealed today by the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) show a 37% rise in the number of under fives admitted to hospital due to contact burns in Scotland ⁽¹⁾. With the growing popularity of hair straighteners, hospitals are treating increasing numbers of serious burns.

Hair straighteners can reach temperatures of 220 °C, so can burn children as badly as irons. They can also still burn children up to eight minutes after they have been unplugged. As young children's skin is fifteen times thinner than an adult's, burns from hair straighteners can cause permanent scarring.²

A poll by online mums' portal, NetMums, commissioned by CAPT to mark the launch of Child Safety Week (Monday 22 to Sunday 28 June), showed many mums are unaware of the threat from modern day home hazards. Topping the list of their concerns were electrical sockets – which due to legislation do not pose a significant threat to young children – with almost one in five mums in Scotland feeling their child was at risk of being hurt. In contrast, only one in 12 worried about hair straighteners.

In addition, mums of under fives worry far more about road accidents, despite most hospital admissions due to accidents being from accidents in the home.³

Katrina Phillips, Chief Executive of the Child Accident Prevention Trust, says:

“With the rapid pace of modern life and the speed at which children develop, it can be a challenge for parents to stay one step ahead in preventing serious accidents. Over the last ten years, there's actually been a slight drop in the numbers of under

fives admitted to hospital from accidents in the home – but it's the changing nature of accidents that often catches parents by surprise.

“It's often the small changes that make all the difference. The trick is to make them a habit – like putting your straighteners in the same place out of young children's reach – that way you'll feel less like you constantly need eyes in the back of your head. Child Safety Week helps alert parents to these changes and the simple steps they can take to make their homes safer for children”.

Minister for Community Safety, Fergus Ewing, said: “Accident prevention and child safety are key themes for the Scottish Government in our commitment to build a safer and stronger Scotland. That is why I am delighted that we are continuing to support Child Safety Week.”

Siobhan Freegard, Founder of NetMums, says: “All children suffer bumps and knocks, they're part of growing up. But increasingly we're seeing mums highlighting accidents occurring in the home in ways they just haven't expected, and warning other mums of the risks.”

Less common but potentially serious home accidents highlighted in the NetMums survey included getting tangled in blind cords and eating detergent capsules.

Commenting on the findings Cameron Smith, Business Manager at Bitrex , the bittering agent which goes into cleaning products, said: “Detergent capsules are a good example of a modern hazard that parents just aren't aware of. Children can be attracted to the brightly coloured detergent capsules which, when the liquid is swallowed could lead to accidental poisoning. They're often kept under the kitchen sink in a box with no child-resistant cap. And the capsules often have no bittering agent to stop children swallowing them.”

To find out more about child safety, including advice and information on how to make your home safe, visit www.childsafetyweek.org.uk.

Ends.

<p>Contact the Child Accident Prevention Trust: Pam Prentice, 0207608 7361, pam.prentice@capt.org.uk, www.childsafetyweek.org.uk</p>

NOTES TO EDITORS

Child Accident Prevention Trust:

The Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) is the UK's leading charity working to reduce the number of children and young people killed, disabled or seriously injured in accidents. It wants to see children leading active, healthy lives – not 'wrapped in cotton wool'. It is the national organiser of Child Safety Week. For more information visit www.capt.org.uk/aboutus

Child Safety Week sponsors:

Child Safety Week 2009's official supporters are:

- The Scottish Government www.scotland.gov.uk
- Bitrex[®], the bittering agent that deters young children from drinking household cleaning products www.bitrex.com
- The Electrical Safety Council, a charity promoting electrical safety www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk
- The Department for Children, Schools and Families www.dcsf.gov.uk
- The Department of Health www.dh.gov.uk
- The Department for Transport www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk

Statistics:

- NetMums questioned 1,166 mums of children under five throughout the UK on their concerns for their children's safety. The survey ran from 31 May to June 7th 2009.

Sources:

1. IDS Scotland 1996-97 and 2007-2008

2. *Burns in children caused by hair straighteners: epidemiology and investigation of heating/cooling curves*, Journal of Burn Care and Research 2008, Mehta et al .
Contact burns from hair straighteners: a new hazard in the home, Emergency Medicine Journal 2006, Duncan et al .
Hair straighteners: a significant burn risk, Burns Journal, 2008, Breuning and Papini.

3. IDS Scotland 2008