

# Bottle Warmer Burns



## Reality Alert

A small facility had been using a crock pot to warm formula for several years. The device was in the kitchen placed on top of a small mini-refrigerator and was plugged into a power surge protector. The crock pot was powered on from 9am to 5pm everyday. Two children had just been placed in high chairs for lunch, when one of the kids pulled at an exposed electrical cord and was splashed with scalding hot water. The incident did not immediately appear to be serious, but it quickly became clear the 18-month-old received second- and third- degree burns over 40% of her body! After therapy, skin grafting, and more than \$200,000 in medical expenses, the child will likely have scarring along her neck, back, hands, and legs for the rest of her life.

## Statistics

In 2003, an estimated 83,300 children, ages 14 and under, were treated in emergency rooms for burn-related injuries. An additional 1,000 children die each year from fire and burns. Among children ages 4 and younger, scald burns account for 65% of hospitalizations and almost \$40 million in expenses.

## Defining the Exposure

Researchers at the Department of Trauma and Burn Services at the Children's National Medical Center have identified the most common cause of unintentional scald burns as hot liquid spills from a countertop or stove. In the childcare industry, most of these spills tend to be closely connected to the improper heating of formula.

**Microwaves** – Most states have adopted regulatory restrictions on the use of microwaves to heat formula. Although a microwave may get the job done quickly, it does so inconsistently. Pockets of extremely hot formula can make the temperature vary greatly in between sips. Microwaves can also damage bottles which result in piping hot formula spilling on a child. **THERE IS NEVER AN APPROPRIATE TIME TO USE A MICROWAVE TO HEAT FORMULA.**

**Slow Cookers and Crock Pots** – Many states prevent child care facilities from using crock pots for both food preparation and bottle warming, and with good reason. Not only can the continuously-high temperatures cause a severe burn exposure if knocked over, as was the case in the Reality Alert, but they also attract armies of bacteria.

## Unnecessary Danger

According to the British Medical Journal, “No differences related to sleep patterns, food intake, weight gain, and frequency of crying and regurgitation have been found when compared between infants given warm milk and others given milk from the refrigerator.” Efforts should be made to share this valuable information with parents. With their support, infants can be weaned off of warm formula and childcare facilities can become safer places to learn, play, and socialize.

There is no benefit to warming a child's formula. With so little upside, and so much at stake ... why take the chance?

## General Guidelines

SAFEST SOLUTION	ALTERNATIVE
Serve bottles at room temperature.	Heat bottle by running it under warm tap water.
Remove all crock pots.	Secure the crock pot and all cords with straps. Place in a blocked-off area accessible only to adults. Provide detailed guidelines for use and cleaning near the device. Water temperatures cannot exceed 120°F.

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