

Fire Prevention in the Kitchen

Each year kitchen fires kill hundreds of people and injure thousands in North America. Most of these fires can be prevented by following these basic fire safety tips.

Don't leave cooking unattended

Never leave food cooking on your stove or in your oven when you leave home. Stay in the kitchen whenever anything is cooking. Turn off stoves and appliances promptly when you're finished using them and unplug electrical appliances when they are not in use.

Keep appliances clean

Built-up grease catches fire easily. Wipe appliance surfaces after spills and clean stove surfaces and ovens regularly.

Wear close-fitting sleeves

Loose sleeves can dangle too close to hot stove burners and catch fire. Protect yourself by wearing sleeves that fit snugly, or by rolling up your sleeves securely when you cook. Don't store things on or above your stove. Clothing can catch fire when you lean over stove burners to reach shelves.

Keep flammable objects clear of the stove

Pot holders, dish towels, and curtains catch fire easily. Keep such items at least three feet (one meter) from your stove.

Don't overload electrical outlets

Plugging too many kitchen appliances, especially heat-producing appliances such as toasters, coffee pots, waffle irons, or electric frying pans, into the same electrical outlet or circuit could overload your circuit, overheat, or cause a fire. Keep heat-producing appliances away from walls or curtains. Replace any frayed or cracked electric cords immediately. Never use appliance cords with a cracked, loose, or damaged plug. Keep your home's fuse or circuit breakers in good working order. If an electrical appliance gets wet inside, have it serviced before using it again.

Operate microwaves safely

Microwave ovens stay cool, but what's cooked in them can be very hot. Use pot holders when removing food from microwave ovens. Remove lids from packaged microwave foods carefully to prevent steam burns and test food temperature before eating.

Turn pot handles inward

A pot handle sticking out over the edge of your stove can be bumped in passing or grabbed by a child. Prevent burns and stovetop fires by always turning pot handles in toward the back of the stove. Enforce a "Kid-Free Zone" to keep children at least three feet (one meter) away from the stove.

Heat oil slowly

Heat cooking oil slowly over moderate heat and never leave hot oil unattended.

If a grease fire starts, smother it

Never pour water on a cooking fire. If a pan of food catches fire, carefully slide a lid over the pan and turn off your stove burner. Keep the lid on until completely cooled. If a fire starts in your oven, close the oven door and turn off the heat source. If the flames do not go out immediately, call the fire department.

Close the door on microwave fires

If anything catches fire in your microwave, keep the door closed and turn off or unplug the microwave. Opening the door will only feed oxygen to the fire. Do not use the oven again until it is serviced.

Portable fire extinguishers

Portable fire extinguishers can be effective in fighting small, contained fires. Extinguishers are identified by the type, or class, of fire they can put out.

Class A:

Ordinary combustibles (paper, wood, cloth)

Class B:

Flammable liquids (gasoline, oil, grease, kerosene)

Class C:

Energized electrical equipment (wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers, machinery)

Your extinguisher must be appropriate for the type of fire being fought. If you use the wrong type of extinguisher, you can endanger yourself and make the fire worse.

Multi-purpose extinguishers, labeled ABC, may be used on all three classes of fires. In some cases, it may be dangerous to use any type of extinguisher. For example, an extinguishing agent released under pressure could spread a grease fire in a frying pan instead of putting it out. Read directions carefully.

First aid for burns

Run cool water over a burn for 10 to 15 minutes. This will minimize skin damage and ease the pain. Never apply butter or other grease to a burn. If the burned skin is blistered or charred, see a doctor immediately.

Stop, drop, and roll

If your clothing catches fire, do not run. STOP where you are, DROP to the ground, cover your face with your hands, and ROLL over and over to smother the flames. If someone else's clothes catch fire, push them to the ground and roll them over and over, or smother the flames with a flame-resistant blanket or carpet.

Fire Safety Education ... the Best Fire Prevention

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