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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Safety screens a must for glass-fronted gas fireplaces

Gas fireplaces are an increasingly popular decorative addition in homes across the country. Easy-to-use and inexpensive, they require less maintenance than their wood-burning counterparts. But unlike traditional wood-burning fireplaces, glass-fronted fireplaces lack the signs that many young children associate with a hot fire. The flame is behind a panel of glass that can reach temperatures up to 1,328 degrees Fahrenheit. This puts children at a high risk of being severely burned.



In fact, according to new research, 402 children have been seen in burn centers for their injuries in the past five years after coming into contact with glass-fronted gas fireplaces. These injuries led to an estimated 17,000 medical visits, 360 emergency department visits and 33 hospital admissions per year. Hands, most often the palm, made up 95% of these burns, and about 3%-11% of hand burns needed surgery.

To prevent these burns, new standards took effect Jan. 1 requiring all new gas-burning fireplaces to be sold with a screen safety barrier to be attached when the fireplace is installed. Additional information about burn risks also is provided in packaging. Although existing fireplaces are not affected, the rule helps prevent children from being injured from newer gas-burning fireplaces.

Experts at the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Burn Association urge parents who own a glass-fronted gas fireplace to follow safety measures:

- Purchase and install a protective, heat-resistant fireplace safety screen to use as a barrier on gas-burning fireplaces. The screen should be able to support the weight of the child.
- Be aware that toddlers and young children are at significant risk of being burned by the hot glass front while a fire is burning and for at least 30 minutes after the fire is out.
- Supervise children around gas fireplaces, especially at resorts or when visiting another home.
- Consider not using the fireplace when young children are around.
- If your child is burned, cool the area with water, apply moist clean bandages and seek medical attention. For more information on first aid for burns, visit <http://bit.ly/1Ch5EDw>.

— by Michael A. Gittelman, M.D., FAAP,
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