

Young children from deprived areas are more at risk of serious burns and scalds

School for
Primary Care
Research

STUDY SUMMARY

NHS
National Institute for
Health Research

Five in every 1,000 children under four are injured by burns and scalds each year in England, although these injuries are becoming less common. Serious injuries needing hospital treatment happen more often to children from deprived areas than wealthy areas.

The study looked at general practice data from 1998 to 2013. It showed a steady decline in children having burns and scalds over the 15 year period, and the gap between least- and most-deprived areas has narrowed. However, children from the most deprived areas are more than twice as likely to need hospital treatment. Children aged 15 to 17 months are most at risk.

Most burns and scalds are preventable. The findings suggest that programmes to prevent these injuries should be targeted at deprived areas, to reduce the devastating effect of serious burns on young children's lives.



Publication:

Differing patterns in thermal injury incidence and hospitalisations among 0–4 year old children from England. R Baker, L Tata, D Kendrick, T Burch, M Kennedy, E Orton. Burns Volume 42 Issue 7, 2016. doi: 10.1016/j.burns.2016.05.007

Differing patterns in thermal injury incidence and hospitalisations among 0–4 year old children from England



www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk

Issue:

In 2014, Public Health England named prevention of burns and scalds in young children as one of its five priority areas. Burns and scalds can be expensive to treat (e.g. £173k for a single serious bathwater scald), and can cause life-altering physical and psychological disabilities, as well as significant pain and distress to the child and family.

What we did:

Researchers used data from the UK's Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD) and Hospital Episode Statistics to identify burns and scalds reported among children under five, from 1998 to 2013. They had information on 708,050 children, who between them had 11,406 burn or scald injuries.

Burns related to chemicals or corrosive agents were not included. To avoid counting the same injury more than once, researchers excluded records of injuries close together in time.

They carried out analyses to estimate the incidence of burns and scalds by age, gender, socioeconomic status and calendar time

What we found:

Although the numbers of young children suffering burns and scalds have decreased, these preventable injuries still happen too often. Given the high rate of serious injuries in children from deprived areas shown in this study, injury prevention programmes should be targeted at these households.