The microwave oven is an indispensable appliance in today’s kitchen. It’s quick, clean and has no open flame or hot coils to burn little fingers. However, parents must set rules and teach children the guidelines for safe microwave use to prevent accidents.

Safety Overview
In order to use a microwave safely, it is important to understand that foods react differently when heated in a microwave oven than when heated in a conventional oven.

Here are some things you should know and share with your children as you use the microwave oven:

- Use microwave-safe cookware; keep these containers within your child’s reach.
- Read and follow microwave instructions on the package. Frequently, the cooking instructions will include:
  - Stir step: Stirring food in the middle of cooking eliminates possible cold spots and promotes even cooking.
  - Stand step: Allowing food to “rest” or “stand” completes the cooking process. During the “rest time,” the temperature of the food item can rise several degrees.
  - Take the temperature: The temperature should measure at least 165°F. Signs such as steam and bubbling liquids are indications that the temperature may be getting close to 165°F.
- Use potholders to remove foods from the microwave oven. Keep potholders near the microwave.
- Set a good example for your children by practicing good microwave safety habits yourself. Make sure you carefully read the safety section of your microwave owner’s manual.
- Never remove hot foods from the microwave when small children are underfoot.
- Don’t leave the kitchen while you are cooking.
- If you want to ensure that your child will not use the microwave oven when you’re not around, unplug it or store it out of reach.
- Explain that microwave ovens are not toys.
- Discuss safety rules and operating instructions.
- Supervise your child until you are confident he or she can perform all the steps and can react appropriately to situations like food boiling over or spills.
- Instruct youngsters to never put anything into a microwave oven without an adult’s permission.
- When you do allow your child to use the microwave, make sure the oven is placed low enough to be used easily.
- Show children how to open hot containers. Foods prepared in the microwave contain steam. Open lids so that the steam escapes away from the face.

Kids in the Kitchen
Kids love feeling helpful! So involve them in kitchen activities that they can handle safely. The first step in working in the kitchen is to wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.

Kids can:
- Clean vegetables with vegetable scrub brushes.
- Wrap foil around food.
- Measure out dry ingredients with measuring cups and spoons.
- Fold napkins.
- Set the table and clear the table.
- Use the microwave oven if supervised by an adult.

A final note: Don’t forget to let grandparents, babysitters and other caregivers know about your in-home safety rules, including tips on using the microwave oven.