

Microwave Cooking Keep Kids Safe



The microwave oven is an indispensable appliance in today's kitchen. Microwave ovens are found in 90 percent of American households. It's quick, clean and has no open flame or hot coils to burn little fingers. However, caution must be used as 5 percent of all microwave oven-related injuries in 2009 were scald burns occurring in children under 5 years of age*. That's why parents need to decide when a child is old enough to use the microwave oven.

A frequent rule of thumb is that a child can use a microwave when he or she is old enough to read and understand food preparation instructions and the microwave oven keypad. Parents must set rules and teach children the guidelines for safe microwave use to prevent accidents.

Microwave Safety Tips for Parents



- ✓ 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.

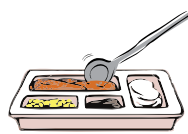


* Home Fires Involving Cooking Equipment, National Fire Protection Agency, Fire Analysis and Research, pg 93, 11/09.

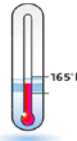
- ✓ Explain that microwave ovens are not toys.
- ✓ Discuss safety rules and operating instructions.
- ✓ Supervise your child until you are confident he or she can perform all the steps and can react appropriately to situations like food boiling over or spills.
- ✓ Instruct youngsters to never put anything 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.



- ✓ Teach your child how to stir and mix the heated food before tasting. Foods heat unevenly and stirring helps distribute the heat throughout the foods and avoids hot spots.



- ✓ If children are old enough to reheat foods, teach them to use a food thermometer to check for safety. Heat the food to 165°F.

- ✓ Parents know their children best and should decide when a child can use the microwave safely based on the guidelines above.

The wattage of your microwave oven influences cooking times. The higher the wattage of a microwave oven, the faster food will cook. The output wattage of your microwave oven may be found in the instruction manual of your unit, on a sticker or label inside the oven door, or by checking for your brand at: www.microwaveovenfacts.com.



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Safety Overview

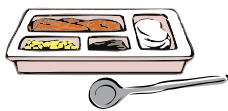
In order to use a microwave safely, it is important to understand that foods react differently when heated in a microwave oven than when heated in a conventional oven.

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

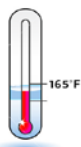
- ✓ Use microwave-safe cookware; keep these containers within your child's reach.
- ✓ Read and follow microwave instructions on the package. Frequently, the cooking instructions will include:



- ✓ 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.

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.

