

COOKING AND KITCHEN SAFETY

"Fire Prevention in the Kitchen"

Each year in North America, kitchen fires kill hundreds of people and injure thousands. Simply following the basic fire safety tips listed below can prevent most of these fires.

Don't leave cooking unattended...

Stay in the kitchen whenever anything is cooking, and never leave food cooking on your stove or in your oven when you leave home. 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.

Be alert!

Studies show that 43 percent of the people who've died in cooking fires were asleep. Do not attempt to cook if you have been drinking alcohol or are drowsy.

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 rolling up your sleeves securely when you cook. Don't store things on or above your stove. Clothing can catch fire easily when you lean over burners to reach shelves.

Keep flammable objects clear of the stove...

Pot holders, dishtowels, and curtains catch fire easily. Keep such items a safe distance from your stove.

Don't overload electrical outlets...

Plugging too many kitchen appliances - especially heat-producing appliances such as toasters, coffeepots, 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 out from under cabinets and away from walls or curtains. Replace any frayed or cracked electrical cord immediately. Never use an appliance cord with a cracked, loose or damaged plug. Keep your home's fuses or circuit breakers in good working order. If an electrical appliance gets wet internally, have it serviced before using it again.

Microwave safety...

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

Turn pot handles in...

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.

Heat oil slowly...

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

If a fire starts:

- Smother a grease fire.
- 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. 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.

See also: [Portable Fire Extinguishers](#)

During the holiday season, kitchen use increases as everyone is busy preparing special treats and food for celebrations and parties. This is also a time when burn and fire injuries rise, especially in the kitchen. According to the National Fire Protection Association, cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in the U.S., so it is especially important to pay close attention when you are in the kitchen.

Children need to be supervised in the kitchen and taught how to handle appliances properly. Establish a "Safe Area" for younger children away from cooking appliances and potential dangers so that they can learn kitchen safety practices and know that these items are not toys. You can even partition off an area with colored tape. This will also limit unnecessary kitchen traffic around the stove and oven, making the area safer for everyone. Do not ever leave young children unattended in the kitchen, even for a moment.

As part of general kitchen safety, keeping a clean kitchen can reduce the chance of cooking fires. Keep all combustible materials away from cooking appliances. Don't leave towels, sponges, pot holders or paper and plastic products near the stove, heating or hot appliances. Even curtains close to the stove should be removed or tied back. Preventing grease build-up on your stovetop, exhaust fan and ovens, including microwaves, can also prevent fires. Since cooking grease and oil are highly flammable, they can catch on fire easily and burn rapidly. You should clean all appliances regularly and after spilling or dropping anything.

If a fire were to start on the top of your stove, would you know what to do? Never throw water or flour on the fire because either of these could make the fire worse by spreading the flames. Instead, using pot holders, cover the pan with a tight fitting lid or a larger pot to smother the fire, then turn off the heat and exhaust fan. Never attempt to carry a pan that is on fire to any place.

If something catches on fire in your oven or microwave oven, turn off the oven and leave the door closed. Opening the door allows more oxygen to reach the fire, which helps the fire burn better. It is also wise to keep an ABC fire extinguisher in your kitchen, at least ten feet away from your cooking appliances. Cleaning these appliances will help prevent grease and other cooking fires.

When cooking, tie longhair back and wear well-fitted clothing because loose or long articles can easily catch on fire. Also, avoid having to reach over the stove. Store the items you use most frequently in cabinets to the sides of the stove or in other areas of the kitchen instead of above or behind it. Definitely don't store treats or goodies near the stove, children might be tempted and climb on top of the stove.

