



# How hot is the hot water in your home?

**Tap water that is too hot burns thousands of people each year. Water burns, or scalds, can require hospital treatment. They can even lead to death. You can help prevent most scalds.**

Check the water temperature at all the faucets in the home. Pay close attention to the faucets used by children or anyone who might have a hard time regulating water temperature. If the water at any tap is higher than 120 degrees Fahrenheit, turn down the water heater. Hot water should be between 105 degrees and 120 degrees.

Lowering the hot water thermostat can save money on utility bills. In some cases, the law requires monitoring and adjusting of water temperature.



## Who has the highest risk of scalds?

Children ages 5 and under and older adults are at the highest risk of scalds. Individuals who use help with personal care and bathing are also at higher risk.

Not all people sense hot and cold the same. The person you care for might not recognize when water is too hot. Some have slower reaction times and might not be able to get out of scalding water in time.



## When are scalds most likely to happen?

Bathing is one of the most common hazards for scalds. Teach the person you care for to test the water before they get in. When you are helping someone with bathing, test the water before helping them in. Run your hand, wrist and forearm through the water. The water should be warm, not hot.

Scalds can also happen during handwashing. Show how to mix hot and cold water to a safe temperature.

The risk of burns is greatest when water temperature is above 120 degrees.

- 150-degree water scalds in less than a second.
- 140-degree water scalds in just one second.
- It takes four minutes for 120-degree water to scald.
- Safe bathing temperature is 100 degrees, cooler for infants or elderly.

# How hot is the hot water in your home?



## References

### **American Burn Association:**

[https://ameriburn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/nbaw2019\\_statsdataresources\\_120618-1.pdf](https://ameriburn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/nbaw2019_statsdataresources_120618-1.pdf)

### **Mayo Clinic:**

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/first-aid/first-aid-burns/basics/art-20056649>

### **U.S. Department of Energy:**

<https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/do-it-yourself-savings-project-lower-water-heating-temperature>

### **U.S. Fire Administration:**

[https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/burn\\_and\\_scald\\_prevention\\_flyer.pdf](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/burn_and_scald_prevention_flyer.pdf)

## How do I check the temperature of the water?

You can check the temperature by holding a thermometer under a running faucet. Check the temperature at all hot water faucets, especially ones used by the person you care for.

Do this every month or every two months. Document and save the results.

To get an accurate reading:

- Use a thermometer that measures liquids.
- Follow the manufacturer's guide to calibrate the thermometer.
- Use no hot water for two hours before measuring.
- Run the faucet two to three minutes until hot water comes out.
- Keep as much of the thermometer probe in the flow as possible.

Water temperatures may read different depending on the distance between the faucet and the water heater. Changes in seasons and weather can also affect the water temperature. This is why regular checks are important to prevent scalds.

## How do I adjust the water heater?

Talk to the homeowner, landlord or manager. Share the concerns of scalds. Show them your temperature log and ask them to adjust the settings of the water heater.

Call your local electric or gas company to adjust the thermostat. Some companies do this at no charge.

You may adjust it yourself if you are able and know how. After adjusting the heater, recheck temperatures after a few hours and again for the next few days.

## What if someone gets a scald?

Scalds are serious. Get medical attention immediately if they experience any of the following:

- Burns on the hands, feet, genitals, buttocks or major joints.
- A burn that is more than three inches across (top of soup can).
- Discolored skin.
- Severe pain, swelling, signs of shock or change in mental status.