

SAFETY IS NOT AN ACCIDENT IT'S EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Purpose

The purpose of this Alert is to heighten awareness of families and employees to the potential for bathtub drownings, scalds and falls occurring within the DD system. By utilizing some basic bathroom safety strategies, we can minimize the risks and prevent some of these incidents. This Alert provides some interesting facts and discusses how to prevent these tragic incidents and provide immediate medical care when needed.

All DD Employees are required to be trained, annually, on identification and reporting of Major Unusual Incidents and Unusual Incidents prior to direct contact. This training includes the review of any **Health and Welfare Alerts** released since the previous calendar year's training.

For questions or comments, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

Visit the Health and Safety Toolkit

<http://dodd.ohio.gov/HealthandSafety/Pages/Tool-Kits.aspx>

Did you know

- Many accidents happen in the bathroom. These incidents include scalding burns, falls, and even drownings.
- Falls accounted for 45 % of all Significant Injury Major Unusual Incidents (MUI) in 2015.
- Environmental factors such as walk-in tubs, slippery floors, hot water temperatures, and lack of grab bars were often a contributing factor to these accidents.
- Lack of supervision was the leading cause.
- Some of the incidents, injuries and deaths could have been prevented!

Walk-in Tubs:

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities has identified incidents of drowning and scalding injuries directly related to "walk-in" tubs. The use of walk-in tubs can place individuals at risk in terms of scalding, inability to open inner tub door in an emergency if water filled, slipping under the water either from the "seat" or slipping on the inner tub floor. There is also risk of hypothermia.

Individuals who are prone to seizures, lack upper body strength, have mobility issues, or are unable to verbalize are often at greater risk when using this particular tub.



Note: A doctor's order does not equate to medical necessity. The team should consider other safer bathing options that can meet the individual's medical need.

Tub Safety Considerations:

- Anti-scald valve (monitor corrosion)
- Anti-slip tub floor and seat
- Quick release drain
- Safety bars
- Wide door
- Proper supervision
- Proper evaluation of the person's medical and physical considerations
- Structural integrity of the foundation that will "secure" the walk-in tub
- Heater that can support the gallon capacity of the walk-in tub

Facts about Drowning:

- Drowning is one of the leading causes of death in 1-4 year olds.
- A majority of bathtub drowning victims drown during a brief (less than 5 minutes) lapse in supervision.
- Drowning can occur in very little water and children may drown in as little as an inch or two of water.
- For persons with seizure disorders, drowning is the most common cause of unintentional injury/death, with the bathtub being the site of highest drowning risk.

Bathtub Drowning Prevention:

- Get all of your supplies (i.e. towels, clothing, hygiene products, etc.) ready before entering the bathroom.
- Provide the necessary supports.
- At-risk children or adults should never be left unattended in the bathtub for any reason.
- Don't run to answer the phone.

Bathtub Drowning Prevention continued:

- If an individual has a seizure disorder, provide 1:1 supervision around any water source.
- If an individual has a seizure disorder, always assure that appropriate medications are given as prescribed.
- Don't check to see who is at the door.
- Don't leave siblings or unfamiliar caretakers to watch individual(s).
- Don't rely on bathtub seats or rings. They create a false sense of security for the parent or caregiver.

Hot Water Scalds:

A scald injury occurs when hot liquid or steam comes in contact with the skin damaging one or more layers. The chart to the right represents how long it takes for a person to sustain a scald injury at high temperatures. As you can see *every second counts!*



Scald Prevention:

- Make sure that water is set at a safe temperature. The recommended maximum residential standard is 120°F (48°C) (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission) Many facilities maximum temperature is **110°F** (43°C) (Recommended by some state or local regulations)
- Run hot water up to two minutes at tap
- If initial test temperature is above 120° F (48° C), lower heater thermostat setting
- Water temperatures should be checked throughout the bath/shower to ensure safe temperatures.
- Retest several times until safe temperature is assured

Temperatures in which scalding occurs	
Temperature	Time exposed
120	5 minutes
125	1.5-2 minutes
130	30 seconds
140	5 seconds
150	1.5 seconds
155	1 second

Prevention and fast action is key to minimizing risks in the bathroom

- Ensure that tub fixtures (walk-in tubs) are safe for the individual and take into consideration their mobility, medical conditions and safety.
- Provide supervision/supports to ensure safety-be prepared with needed items like towels and clothes. Never leave to answer phone or door.
- Establish safe hot water temperature and consider installing tempering valve or safe faucet and showerheads. If the person rents an apartment or home, talk to the property owner about these safety features.
- Always check the water temperature before assisting someone in the tub or shower.
- Install non-slip bath, shower mats and grab bars.
- Do routine checks for any safety hazards and report immediately.
- **Seek immediate medical treatment for burns.** Do not wait. Cover the burn with a clean, dry cloth to reduce the risk of infection. Do not put any salve or medicine on the burned area, so your doctor can properly assess your burn. Do not put ice or butter on the burned area, because these measures do not help and can damage the skin tissue.

More Info:

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyHomes/ByRoom/bathroom.html>

<http://www.ddssafety.net/safety/water-safety/drowning-prevention>

<http://www.safekids.org>

<http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html>

<http://aging.ohio.gov/steady/>

<http://dodd.ohio.gov/HealthandSafety/Document/s/Fire%20and%20Burn%20Prevention%20Healthcare%20Providers%20handouts.pdf>

For Questions or Comments

For questions or comments regarding this alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit.

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