

## Waikato Hospital treats 160 children with serious burns in two years

Libby Wilson 09:34, Aug 26 2018



Sometimes there were two children a week arriving with "nasty" burns, Waikato paediatrician John Goldsmith says (file photo).

When the cold weather comes, so do the burns cases.

About 160 children with bad burns were brought to Waikato Hospital over the past two years, a baby less than a month old among them.

"We've had anything up to two children a week coming in with nasty burns that could have been avoided," paediatrician John Goldsmith said at the end of winter.

The cold weather seems to be a trigger.

Waikato's Burns Unit just got a \$5500 boost from a July fund-raising event by the Burns Support Trust.

But there's a lot of work in caring for children with burns severe enough for hospitalisation.

They generally need anaesthetic and surgery, Goldsmith said, often more than once.

The effects can be lifelong and there is a yearly camp for children who have suffered serious burns.

He's seen kids put in intensive care after burns from hot baths, worked with kids who tipped hot liquids on themselves, and seen toddlers with palms burned on a fireplace.

But three steps could prevent about 90 per cent of the burns Goldsmith sees.

- \* Keep hot water cylinder temperature between 50 and 55 degrees Centigrade

- \* Take care with hot liquids, such as tea and soup

- \* Protect kids from fireplaces and heaters

There were 163 children with burns - mainly scalds - brought to Waikato Hospital between May 2016 and April 2018.

Seventy per cent of those children needed surgery, according to data collected by registrar Latitia Patel.

The median age for the children was 22 months, but the range ran from 26 days to 14 years 8 months.

Less than a quarter of the burns were appropriately cooled before arrival, according to the data.

Recommended first aid is to run the burn under cold tap water for 20 minutes, remove clothing or cut around any which is stuck, and to cover the burn with clean, non-fluffy material, such as a sheet or plastic wrap.

Burns Support Trust president Peter Sharp's daughter was burnt by a cup of tea when she was 18 months old.

She's now 14, but he still cringes if he sees a hot drink put down when a toddler's running about.

The trust he leads has been running for about 25 years, and recently raised \$5500 for the Waikato Burns Unit.

It also raises money for burns survivors, for equipment for hospitals, and makes care packages for people during their hospital stay.

### **What to do after a burn**

Run water from the cold tap gently over the burn for 20 minutes, or until an ambulance arrives. For patients vulnerable to hypothermia (babies or elderly), lukewarm water is OK.

Do not touch the burn or burst any blisters - this can cause infection.

Once cooled, remove clothing from the burned area. If clothing sticks, cut around the fabric.

Cover the burn with clean, non-fluffy material (a sheet or loosely cover with plastic wrap) to prevent infection. Do not cover the face.

Seek advice from your doctor or hospital.

In an emergency, call 111.

*Source: Waikato District Health Board*

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