

U.S. Public Health Service Nursing

TIP OF THE MONTH

Fire Safety and Prevention

February 2019



As the seasons are changing, fall and winter can be associated with the turning of the leaves, the colder temperatures and enjoying a book by the fireplace or outdoor fire pit. A warm fire brings to mind that October was Fire Safety Month and the extra precautions that should be taken with fire. The frequent news reports, including the most recent tragic wild fire in California, of lives lost and the overwhelming damage to property and livelihoods from fires is sobering. Unfortunately, approximately 90% of the wildfires that occur in the US are caused by people and were preventable: ([Facts + Statistics: Wildfire](#)) Wildfires are not the only fires that are affecting the US. In 2016, there were over 350,000 house fires with over 2,700 deaths and 10,750 injuries. Click for information to reduce the risk of home fire related incidences: ([Home Fires](#))

Home Fire Safety

October was Fire Safety Month and the 2018 theme was “Look. Listen. Learn. Be Aware! Fire can happen anywhere.”

- 1. Look**– Look for places in your home that could present potential fire hazards such as unattended candles, fireplaces or smoking materials. Cooking is the number one cause of home fires and injuries. Do not leave food that is cooking unattended, do not put metal or foil in the microwave oven and do not throw water on a grease fire. Have a fire extinguisher available in the kitchen. To avoid an electrical fire, it is recommended to make sure all appliances are in good working order with no frayed wires. Unplugging appliances and space heaters when not in use and not overloading electrical outlets are good practices.
- 2. Listen**– For the sound of the smoke alarm. A smoke alarm needs to be in good working order to be able to increase your chance of surviving an home fire. A good habit to get into would be to test the batteries in your smoke detector monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. An easy way to remember the date is to pick your birthday or an anniversary.
- 3. Learn**– If there is a fire, every second counts to make a successful escape. Every member of your family should learn at least 2 ways of out every room in the case the primary route is blocked. It is recommended to practice your fire escape plan at least twice a year. Families should also make sure the windows are not stuck, screens can be removed and if there are security bars on your windows, that they can be removed.

Outdoor Fire Safety

Staying safe when preparing a fire outdoors depends on the person’s situational awareness and ability to build and extinguish fires properly.

Campfire Safety

1. It is important to choose a safe spot to build a fire. Pick a spot that is downwind from your tent and gear and protected from wind gusts and at least 25 feet away from flammable items including tents and shrubs. Ensure there are no overhanging low branches and the area is cleared of dry leaves and sticks.
2. Do not build a fire in dry or windy conditions, this can increase the chances of the fire to get out of control. Always have a bucket of water or shovel with dirt or sand nearby while the fire is burning.
3. Ensure the fire is completely out before leaving the campfire site. After letting the campfire burn down to ash, pour water on the fire to drown all the embers, not only the red ones.

Outdoor Electrical Lights (i.e. Holiday Lights)

1. Make sure you are hanging up lights rated for outdoor use. They are more insulated for the outdoor elements.
2. Prior to hanging up the lights, check the string of lights for any cracked cords, frayed ends or loose connections.
3. To reduce the risk of shocks and shortages, make sure outdoor lights are plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter outlet.

For more information please visit: [11 Tips for Safe Outdoor lighting](#)

For more information on fire safety for both indoor and outdoor areas, to include safety for people with access or functional needs please visit the following websites: [Home Fire/Ready.gov](#), [Most Common Fire Hazards in Home](#), [Fire Prevention Week](#), and [NFPA Safety tip Sheets](#).

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