



## Media Release

### *Hot Water Burns like Fire*

# 'HOT CUPPA' HORRORS ACCOUNT FOR MAJORITY OF BABY BURNS ADMISSIONS

**AUCKLAND, NZ (28/08/08) -- It's an everyday scene. A mother having a hot cuppa while carrying her baby, or a father placing his coffee at the edge of a table as his baby plays on his feet. The cup spills, and the baby is burnt and hospitalised with significant burns.**

**Tragic? Yes.**

**Rare? It happens more often than you might think.**

Safekids New Zealand's latest factsheet on child burn injuries show that of children aged 1 to 2 years old hospitalised due to severe burn injuries, over half are caused by spilt hot drinks (tea and coffee) and other liquids (such as soups and noodles).

The factsheet, which includes data from Otago University's Injury Prevention Research Unit and Burns Units across the country also shows that while fatalities were fewer compared to burns from fire and flame, hot substance burns (liquids, surfaces, objects) cause at least three times the number of hospitalisations.

Safekids NZ also estimates that one child in New Zealand is burnt severely enough to be hospitalised everyday (2,162 cases from 2002 to 2006, based on the 2007 Child & Youth Epidemiology Report).

### ***Hot Water Burns like Fire***

Ann Weaver, Director of Safekids NZ, said the dangers posed by hot liquids being split on children are often underestimated. "A child's skin is thinner than an adult's, so hot liquids burn quicker, deeper and at lower temperatures. At normal conditions, a hot cuppa that was made 15 minutes previously, can still burn a baby," Ann said.

Safekids NZ provided the following temperature scales comparing the time it takes to burn a child's skin.

- 37° to 40° Celsius: Comfortable bath water temperature
- 55° Celsius: 10 seconds to burn a child's skin
- 60° Celsius: 1 second to burn a child's skin
- 70° Celsius: Will burn a child's skin instantly
- 80-90° Celsius: Normal temperature of a freshly-boiled cup of tea

"Hot water burns like fire, and a single hot drink spilled over a baby is equivalent to a bucket of boiling water tipped over an adult," Ann added.

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**(Cont'd.)**

Safekids NZ added that severely burned babies often require multiple operations and treatments. "Burnt babies and their traumatised families will have to deal with the consequences of injuries for the rest of their lives," Ann said.

#### **'Hot' Tips**

Safekids NZ identifies a number of ways to avoid tea time horrors:

- Always keep hot drinks out of reach, near the centre of a table, NOT at the edge.
- Never hold a child and a hot drink at the same time.
- Never pass a hot drink over a child's head.
- Be aware of children when holding a hot drink.
- Actively supervise your children.

For more information on childhood burn injury prevention, visit [www.safekids.org.nz](http://www.safekids.org.nz). For media inquiries, contact (09) 6310717. 021 555 249 or email [anthonyr@adhb.govt.nz](mailto:anthonyr@adhb.govt.nz).

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#### **Editor's Notes:**

##### **About Safekids New Zealand**

Safekids New Zealand is the injury prevention service of Starship Children's Health and a member of Safe Kids Worldwide. Our mission is to reduce the incidence and severity of unintentional injuries to New Zealand's children aged 0 - 14 years. Our Vision: New Zealand children will be free to enjoy their childhood without being adversely affected by unintentional injury. For more information, visit [www.safekids.org.nz](http://www.safekids.org.nz).

##### **About the Injury Prevention Research Unit (Otago)**

The goal of the Injury Prevention Research Unit is to contribute to reducing the incidence, severity and consequences of injury in New Zealand. The IPRU is based in the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine in the Dunedin School of Medicine within the Health Sciences Division of the University of Otago. For more information, visit [www.otago.ac.nz/ipru](http://www.otago.ac.nz/ipru).

##### **The New Zealand Child & Youth Epidemiology Service (NZCYES)**

The New Zealand Child & Youth Epidemiology Service is a joint venture between the Paediatric Society of New Zealand and Uniservices, University of Auckland. Their role is to provide quality child and youth health information. The information was provided in their report "Monitoring the Health of New Zealand Children and Young People: Indicator Handbook 2007 Auckland: Paediatric Society of New Zealand, New Zealand Child & Youth Epidemiology Service (NZCYES).