

## Simple steps to keep kids safe from scalding bath water

Hot water in baths and showers continues to be responsible for serious and life-changing burns and scalds to small children around Australia each year.

June is Kidsafe Burns Awareness Month and the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) is urging people to be extra vigilant around hot water in the home, especially in bathrooms, heading into the colder months.

Having the water temperature set too high in bathrooms can quickly result in very serious burns. It takes as little as one second for water at 68°C to cause a full-thickness scald leading to scarring for life, agonising pain and hospitalisation.

VBA Executive Director of Operations Alison Byrne said this was why Victoria's plumbing regulations limit heated water temperatures in bathrooms to no more than 50°C in new houses and renovations.

"It's so important to make sure that you have the right protections in place to stop little ones from accidentally turning on the wrong tap and burning themselves," Ms Byrne said.

"The difference between 68°C and 50°C might not seem like much, but it can be the difference between a pleasant bath or scarring for life."

"This is why the plumbing laws require a maximum temperature of 50°C at the outlets of each shower head or tap. This is hot enough for a shower, but not hot enough to cause severe scalding."

The exceptions to the 50°C requirement are places intended for children, the elderly or people with disabilities – such as early childhood centres, schools, nursing homes or similar facilities – where the maximum hot water temperature allowed is 45°C.

Older systems (pre-August 1998) are unlikely to be fitted with tempering valves, but there are various ways of reducing the temperature of the water outlets, depending on the type of hot water system.

The VBA recommends talking to a licensed or registered plumber – who are the only people who can install a hot water system and undertake plumbing work in Victoria.

"Installing a tempering valve if one isn't fitted is an easy and quick way to reduce the hot water temperature in the bathroom to keep kids safe," Ms Byrne said.

Installing a thermostatic mixing valve that can be set to deliver hot water at a precise, safe temperature is another way to improve safety.

Continuous flow hot water systems, which allow households to set the desired temperature with electronic control pads so that hot water is delivered at a safe, pre-set temperature, also help improve safety.

It is important to remember that the maximum water settings are not bathing temperatures. The Royal Children's Hospital says the safe temperature for a child's bath is between 37°C and 38°C (or about 36°C for a newborn).

To help avoid scalds in baths, parents should turn the cold water tap on first when running a bath, turn it off last to cool the spout, test the temperature and remain within arm's reach of children in the bath.

For further tips on how to reduce the risk of hot water burns in the bathroom, and for first aid tips in the case of a scald injury, visit the [Kidsafe website](#) or refer to the VBA's [Hot Water Safety Guide](#).