

Avoiding accidental fires in the home

There are basic fire safety measures you can take at home. Following some simple steps and being aware of obvious dangers can help to reduce the risk of an accidental fire and prevent damage and potential loss of life.

Causes of accidental fires

The top causes of accidental fires in the home are:

- cooking or cooking appliances (cookers, ovens, hotplates, grill pans, deep fat fryers, microwaves and toasters)
- electricity supply or other electrical equipment and appliances (plugs, lighting and cables, washing machines, dishwashers and tumble dryers)
- smoking or smoking-related materials (cigarettes, matches and lighters)

Cooking

Fires from cooking and cooking appliances can be avoided by:

- never leaving cooking unattended
- turning off hobs and ovens when finished cooking
- keeping flammable items such as tea towels and oven gloves away from the cooker
- keeping oven and grill pans free from a build-up of oils and grease, which can easily catch fire
- never throwing water onto an oil-based fire

Electrical equipment

Fires from electrical equipment can be avoided by:

- never overloading sockets
- never leaving electrical appliances such as dishwashers or washing machines running overnight or when you leave the house

Smoking

Fires from smoking materials can be avoided by:

- never smoking in bed or when feeling drowsy or tired
- always stubbing cigarettes out fully in an ashtray

‘STOP’ fire

‘STOP Fire’ is an easy to remember fire safety tool for everyone to use. It’s an instant checklist focusing on fire safety basics:

- [smoke alarms](#) – make sure you have at least one working smoke alarm on

every floor

- test weekly – test your smoke alarm weekly or ask someone to check it for you
- obvious fire safety dangers – look out for obvious fire safety dangers, stub out cigarettes, and never leave cooking unattended
- planned escape – have a planned escape, keep access routes clear, close all doors at night and have your keys at the ready

You can find out more about fire safety at the pages below:

Be responsible and protect yourself, your family and your home from fire.

Home Fire Safety Check

Those most at risk from death or injury from accidental fires are:

- people aged 60 or older
- people who have a disability, impaired mobility or a health condition that would affect their ability to be aware of or respond to an emergency in the home
- people who get assistance from a visiting agency on a regular basis to help with day-to-day tasks

That's why [Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service](#) is offering anyone who falls into one of these categories a [free Home Fire Safety Check](#).

Firefighters will install or check that smoke alarms are working, help to identify any obvious dangers, and advise on an escape plan.

More useful links

[Helping the environment by recycling](#)

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Everyone is being encouraged to help the environment by recycling more material, including food waste. Reduce, reuse and recycle where possible as part of the household daily routine.

Food waste

Food waste makes up a significant amount of the household waste we throw out each week.

Making the effort to recycle this food waste can greatly help to improve the environment.

Even small bits of food, like tea bags and coffee grounds, can be recycled.

It is important that everyone uses the recycling services provided by [councils](#) throughout the year.

Locally-produced compost from recycled food waste is being used within our local parks and community gardens, keeping them in good condition for the growth of flowers, fruit and vegetables.

More useful links

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Students urged to be aware of fire safety

Students and their parents are urged to be aware of the dangers of fire. Fire safety advice could be one of the most important lessons for students during their time at university or college.

Smoke alarm and fire escape plan

Living away from home, especially if it's for the first time, can be very exciting and it's easy to get caught up in student life and forget about fire safety.

As parents inspect student accommodation to make sure it's suitable, they should also:

- make sure that premises are fire safe
- remind their children that fire safety checks should always be part of their routine

All students should take personal responsibility for looking after themselves and their housemates to protect them from the dangers of fire.

It's important to have a working smoke alarm fitted on each level of

accommodation and to test them once a week. This will alert students and their housemates to the earliest stage of a fire, giving vital extra time to escape.

Students should follow a good fire safe bedtime routine – checking a few things before going to bed can reduce the risk of fire. It only takes a minute and could save lives.

Also, take some time to agree a fire escape plan to make sure everyone is clear what to do in the event of an emergency. This means knowing where the fire exits are and making sure furniture or stored items do not block them.

If there is no fire exit, plan an alternative escape route other than by the main entrance door.

A lot of students go home at weekends, so they should make sure that accommodation is safely secured and protected from the risk of fire. Make sure all electrical appliances not designed to be left on are disconnected, fully put out cigarettes, and close all doors.

You can find out more about fire safety at the pages below:

Student fire safety advice

Students should:

- test their smoke alarm every week
- prepare a fire escape plan
- carry out a night-time check
- turn off all electrical appliances not designed to be left on
- put a guard on open fires
- put out all cigarettes and empty ashtrays into a non-combustible container
- put out all candles
- close all internal doors
- don't leave cooking unattended
- not cook when under the influence of alcohol

Students should also check that the fire alarm system in their accommodation is working. If it is showing a fault, contact the landlord or the Estates Officer at the university immediately.

More useful links

Importance of getting eyes tested

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It's National Eye Health Week (24 to 30 September). Everyone is being reminded of the importance of good eye health and of having their eyes tested every two years. Looking after your eyes is just as important as looking after the rest of your body.

Preventing damage and sight loss

More than 50 per cent of sight loss is preventable, so getting your eyes tested can help prevent, or limit, the damage caused by certain eye conditions.

Regular eye examinations are important because:

- having your vision corrected can improve the quality of day-to-day life
- they will help detect certain eye conditions such as cataracts, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration, which could lead to sight loss
- poor vision could be a risk factor for falls.

An optometrist may also be able to spot the signs of some broader health conditions with symptoms that affect the eyes, such as diabetes and [high blood pressure](#).

Eye examinations for children are vital to make sure that any visual problems such as squint, lazy eye (amblyopia) or short-sightedness (myopia) are detected and treated early.

Keeping eyes healthy

Other important steps people can take to help keep their eyes healthy include:

- [stopping smoking](#)
- protecting eyes in bright sunlight or glare
- [eating well](#) and taking regular exercise
- wearing safety goggles to protect eyes while doing DIY and/ or sporting activities
- wearing goggles when necessary in the workplace
- taking regular breaks if working at a computer screen

If you do notice a change to your sight, never dismiss it as 'just part of getting older' – visit your local optometrist immediately.

More useful links

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Students encouraged to look after mental health

Thousands of students are beginning a new term at college or university and they are being encouraged to look after their mental health. Students feeling down or under stress should talk to someone they trust and get support.

Stress and pressure

This is a really exciting time for students, but is also a period of huge change. New responsibilities can lead to feelings of stress, such as:

- living away from home
- moving into a new house
- making new friends
- starting a new course

Some students may also need to find a part-time job to help support their studies, which can be an added pressure.

A certain amount of stress is normal but it is really important that students know that looking after their mental health is just as important as looking after their physical health.

Information booklet for students

There is a [booklet for students](#) full of practical tips and information on:

- managing stress
- achieving and maintaining positive mental health and emotional well-being

The booklet covers topics such as money, body image, home life, feeling down, and family issues.

It also contains a list of helpful local organisations and websites which offer support.

The booklet is also available from students' unions.

Recognising potential warning signs

Untreated mental health problems can lead to self-harm and suicide.

Someone who's having suicidal thoughts may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean they don't want help and support. It can be difficult finding the words to express what they are feeling.

You can find out more about what to do if you think someone might be in need of immediate help on the [mental health emergency – if you're in crisis or despair page](#).

Lifeline

You can also talk to trained counsellors at any time by contact the crisis helpline Lifeline at:

More useful links