

# Cooking Safety for Older Adults

## WATCH WHAT YOU HEAT

### Cooking is the number one cause of home fires

#### PLAN A: PRIMARY PREVENTION

- The best time to cook is when you are wide awake, and not drowsy from medications or alcohol.
- Always wipe clean the stove, oven, exhaust fan to prevent grease buildup.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Keep a pan lid and dry potholders or oven mitts near you EVERY time you cook.
- Cook on the back burners of the stove when possible.
- Turn pot or pan handles toward the back of the stove.
- When heating food in the microwave, use microwave-safe cookware that allows steam to escape.
- Allow food to rest before removing from the microwave.
- When frying, use a pan lid or splash guard to prevent grease splatter.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly. Remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you to check on your cooking.
- After cooking, check the kitchen to make sure all burners and other appliances are turned off.

#### PLAN B: SECONDARY PREVENTION

*If your food does catch on fire...*

1. Cover the pan with its lid. A cookie sheet works too. Leave covered until the pan is cool. NEVER move the pot or carry it outside - the pot is too hot to handle and the contents may splash, causing a severe burn.
2. Turn the heat off. With the lid on and the heat off, the fire should quickly put itself out. NEVER use water to put out a kitchen fire. Water will cause the oil to splatter and spread the fire, or scald you as it vaporizes.
3. If the fire is inside the oven or microwave, keep the door shut and turn it off. Keep closed until the oven is cool.
4. If the fire gets out of control- get out, stay out and call 9-1-1. Don't return inside for any reason.

#### STATS

- 47% of all home fires are caused by cooking
- Adults >65 are at much higher risk of injury and death from a kitchen fire due to physical, visual, hearing or mental impairments that may slow the quick action necessary in a fire emergency.
- Thinner skin of older adults burn faster and deeper.
- Preventing a burn injury is always better than the pain and trauma of medical treatment afterward.



**BURN  
PREVENTION**

American Burn Association  
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affected by burn injuries