



Where Are Your Matches and Lighters?

Do you know where your matches and lighters are? Your children do. Just ask them.

It doesn't matter how old your children are. One, two, three, five, ten, or sixteen. Talk to your children about the importance of not touching matches and lighters. Take the time to lock up all matches and lighters in your household.

The tragic consequences of assuming that children will not touch these items are seen across Indiana and the nation, and on the Burn Unit at Riley Hospital for Children. "Fires set by children are one of the leading reasons why children are admitted to the Burn Unit at Riley Hospital and why children under age five die in residential fires in Indiana and across the country," says Dr. John Coleman, Director of Riley Hospital for Children's Burn Awareness Team.

Dr. Coleman recommends that parents consider these everyday precautions to help reinforce the message to children to not touch matches and lighters:

- **Celebrate special events without candles.** Re-think the use of candles to celebrate important events. Children learn early to associate fire with presents, joyous occasions, and holidays. Substitute decorative ornaments or photographs on a special cake.
- **Avoid smoking tobacco in the presence of children.** When a child sees you lighting tobacco products with matches or lighters that come close to your face and you are not hurt, then why should they fear touching these products? Re-think allowing a child to see you lighting and smoking tobacco products. The by-product of this choice is that children also are not exposed to second hand smoke.
- **Lock up matches and lighters.** Cigarette lighters and grill lighters typically are bright-colored and many feature pictures or cartoon characters. A grill lighter may look like a toy gun to some children, with the clicking sound that it generates and the way this product is held in the hand. Do not tell a child to bring you matches or a lighter. Do not leave matches or a lighter easily accessible to a child. This includes fireplace matches, which children may have easy access to if they are left out for regular use during the winter months. These matches, too, should be locked up and stored out of reach of children.

Riley Hospital's Community Education Department in collaboration with the hospital's Burn Awareness Team took steps to create an education poster that promoted the message to lock up matches and lighters. The poster was recognized with a First Place award by the American Burn Association in its national 2000 Burn Poster Contest. Look for it in your community childcare facilities, Head Start Programs, and fire departments in the State of Indiana.

To obtain fire safety education information and materials, contact Riley Hospital's Community Education Department at 317-274-2964 or click www.rileyforkids.org. For additional information about efforts to address juvenile fire setting, contact the Office of the State Fire Marshal at 317-232-2222 or the Fire Stop Program of the Indianapolis Fire Department at 317-327-3473.