WHAT INFLUENCES PARENTS OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE TO TAKE SAFETY MEASURES (077)

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Introduction: Children under 5 years of age are at high risk for sustaining burn injuries. In Europe, almost half of the population with severe burn injuries are children, and children younger than 5 years account for 50% to 80% of all childhood burns. In the Netherlands, 26.8% of the patients with burn injuries who require admission to a burn centre, are under 5 years of age.

Most burns in children under 5 years of age are scalds. The majority of burns in children happen accidentally, occurrence in the home and especially in the kitchen.

The majority of scalds can be prevented when appropriate measures are applied. To apply these measures, parents must know about the risks of scalding, the ability to perform precautionary measures and parents must be willing to perform these measures. The aim of this study was to identify the underlying determinants that influence the desired behaviour.

Methods: Parents of children under 5 years of age, recruited by a Facebook advertisement, completed an internet survey. Parents were asked about their motivation to perform or not perform the desired behaviour. The questions in the survey described 9 measures, that are effective to prevent the most common causes of scalds. The parents were first asked whether they performed the particular safety measure, after which an explanation of the safety measure was given followed by a question about the parents motivation to perform/not perform this measure. Knowledge and attitude were measured by using a multiple choice question. Other determinants of behaviour were examined by an open-ended question.

Results: One of the important outcomes of the survey was that parents think that it is important for a young child to learn to cope with dangerous situations and thereby overestimate the cognitive capacities of children. In addition, parents think that their child is too small to be in danger and do not take into account their sudden development of physical skills. Furthermore, parents overestimate their own ability to keep a constant eye on their child.

Discussion: In order to develop effective prevention interventions, it is necessary to gain insight into the motivation of parents to perform safe or unsafe behaviour formed by the determinants of behaviour. Our outcomes provide a theoretical base for future prevention strategies aimed at the prevention of burn injuries in children. For example, when a determinant of behaviour is risk perception, one should use a strategy to target the perceived risk.