

10.1136/ip.2010.029215.292

Background Young children are at a higher risk of burns. This study was undertaken to investigate risk factors for burns in preschool children in Iraq.

Methods A prospective case-control study in 2008 involving children aged 0–5 years. Cases comprised hospital attenders with a burn injury occurring at home and controls comprised hospital admissions for other conditions, matched on age and sex. Analysis was undertaken using multiple logistic regression.

Results 248 cases and 248 controls recruited. 79% of cases were scalds, 17% contact and 4% flame injuries. Burns most commonly occurred in sitting rooms (53%) and the kitchen (36%) and were most commonly caused by tea utensils (42%) and kerosene stoves (36%). The adjusted ORs for risk factors for burns were 5.4 (95% CI 2.6 to 11.7, $p=0.001$) for poor living standard; 5.3 (95% CI 3.4 to 8.5, $p=0.001$) for child activity score; 2.8 (95% CI 1.5 to 5.2, $p=0.02$), for family history of burns; 1.32 (95% CI 1.02 to 1.70, $p=0.04$) for unit increase in presence of home hazards; 0.4 (95% CI 0.2 to 0.7, $p=0.002$) for presence of a second carer; and 0.14 (95% CI 0.03 to 0.60, $p=0.008$) for presence of disabilities.

Conclusion Poverty, child activity, home hazards, family history and absence of a second carer are significant risk factors for childhood burns. Preventive interventions addressing poor families and focusing on home safety could be effective in reducing childhood burns.

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RISK FACTORS FOR BURNS IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN SULAYMANIYAH, IRAQ: A CASE-CONTROL STUDY

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