

FACTSHEET



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Irons

What is an iron?

An iron is an electrical appliance with a flat metal plate that is heated and used to smooth wrinkles out of clothes. Steam irons are the most common type of irons used in the home and usually have an attached power cord; however cordless models are also available.

After use, it can take up to 90 minutes before an iron cools to a temperature that will not cause a burn.¹



How are children injured?

Burns, electrocution and being struck by an object are the most frequent types of injuries children sustain from irons.

Burns

Children can sustain burns by:

- touching a hot iron, or
- having a hot iron fall on them, as a result of pulling on the cord.

Contact burns sustained from irons can be so severe that children may need skin grafts and ongoing medical treatment.

Electrocution

Children could be electrocuted by irons if they:

- play with damaged or frayed electrical cords,
- touch an active iron with wet hands,
- bite on or place electrical cords in their mouth.

Struck by object

Children can be struck by a falling iron if:

- they pull on dangling power cords,
- they are sitting or playing near an ironing board that tips over.

How common are these injuries?

Between January 2014 and December 2018, 129 children aged less than 5 years were treated in NSW hospitals for a burn from an iron. The majority of these occurred while or just after an adult had been using the iron.²

What are the laws, regulations or standards for irons?

In NSW, the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2017 and the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Regulations (2018) require that electrical products and installations be safe and certain products (declared articles) must be tested and approved before they can be sold.

The easiest way to determine if an iron is approved is to see if it displays an acceptable approval mark, as shown on the NSW Fair Trading website

<https://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/about-fair-trading/legislation-and-publications/changes-to-legislation/gas-and-electricity-consumer-safety-laws>

More information about Gas and Electrical laws in NSW can be found at

<https://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/trades-and-businesses/business-essentials/selling-goods-and-services/electrical-articles/approval-of-electrical-articles>

Remember:

- Purchase an iron that meets the requirements of the *Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2017* (NSW) and the *Gas and Electricity (Consumer safety) Regulations (2018)*. Only use irons which display acceptable approval marks.
- Avoid ironing when small children are around. Iron while children are asleep or place them in a playpen while you iron.
- Ironing boards are unstable structures. Keep children away from ironing boards in use and store safely when not in use.
- Keep steam irons unplugged from power while adding water.
- Do not leave irons unattended.
- Use the stand provided for the iron. Irons that are left face-down on the ironing board may start a fire.
- After use, place hot irons out of reach of children to avoid burn injuries. Make sure that the attached cords are also out of reach of children.
- Immediately after use, fold ironing boards up and store them properly in a secure place.
- Check for products that have been recalled (<https://www.productsafety.gov.au/recalls>) before buying or borrowing an iron for use at home.

References

- ¹ Beers, R., Anthamatten, M., Reid, D., Kahn, S, and Lentz, C. (2009). Development of a Clothing Iron Safety Device. *Journal of Burn Care and Research*, 30 (1), 70-76
- ² NSW Statewide Burn Injury Service. Unpublished data, August 2019.