Home Alone Tip #6

Kitchen Safety

Whether youth home alone are simply feeding themselves a snack or helping to prepare dinner for the family, there are certain kitchen safety tips that are good to go over to help prevent injuries. Together as a family, discuss what kitchen tools and appliances are available to youth to use while alone as well as what foods are allowed. Remember, a balanced diet helps kids grow strong and healthy – following the My Plate guidelines are always a good idea – find them and more fun recipe ideas including their “5 ways” series using common household ingredients at https://www.choosemyplate.gov/.

University of Kentucky 4-H Code Name: Home Alone tells us some of the ways injuries in the kitchen can occur:

- Electric shock from wet fingers
- Slipping on floor spills
- Running into open cabinet doors or drawers
- Burns – injuries from not using a potholder
  - Knife cuts
- Putting metal in a Microwave
- Being distracted while cooking/Not paying attention to food cooking

Depending on what your home allows, there may be other ways to injury to include in your discussion. Basic inexperience can cause youth chefs to make simple mistakes that lead to big consequences.

Besides an injury to oneself, a fire in the home is probably one of the most severe results of an issue while cooking. Make sure to discuss what the plan is if a fire does occur – is there a family meeting place, what to do about other youth in the home/pets, how to safely call 911, methods to try to put a fire out before exiting the home – does your family have a fire extinguisher? If so, where is it and how is it used.

Preparing fruit and vegetables beforehand with a parent, or having leftovers to eat are easy ways to provide youth at home with an easy nutritious meal or snack. One of the easiest things for youth to use to cook in the kitchen is the microwave. Though not fool proof, it is safer than an open flame or hot oven in some cases. Attached you will find one of Miss Pam’s FAVORITE microwave recipes – great for a
Microwave Cheesy Macaroni Recipe

Ingredients:
- 1 ½ cups uncooked macaroni noodles
- 2 cups hot water
- 8 oz. processed cheese (think Velveeta) cut into ½” cubes
- ¼ cup milk – whatever your family normally drinks is fine

Supplies:
- 2-quart microwave safe casserole dish or bowl with a lid for cooking, because pasta expands to 2-3x its original size.
- Colander to drain pasta
- Measuring cups
- Spoon
- Pot Holders
- A safe surface to put the hot casserole dish down on

Instructions:
1. Place macaroni and hot water in a microwavable 2-quart casserole. Cover with lid. *recipe tip – add a few drops of oil to pasta water before cooking to help prevent sticking.
2. Microwave on high (100%) for 5 minutes. Remove from the microwave and stir.
3. Cover casserole with lid and microwave on high for 5 more minutes or until the noodles are tender.
4. Carefully drain the noodles using the colander. This can be dangerous – you may want to practice this step before trying alone to be sure you can do it safely. There will be a lot of steam, and steam can cause burns.
5. Return noodles to the casserole.
6. Add cheese cubes and milk. Stir.
7. Cover casserole with lid and microwave on high for 3 minutes. Stir.
8. Remove from microwave and let stand 5 to 10 minutes. Don’t worry if it looks runny, the macaroni will absorb the milk during the standing time.
9. Serve and enjoy!