

Better Homes and Gardens

HEALTH UPDATE

MEDICAL NEWS YOU CAN USE

MICROWAVES NOT KID STUFF

Burns on the increase

A rise in burns to children has prompted one maker of microwave foods to buck a trend. Mary Anne Jackson, founder of My Own Meals, Inc., which produces a line of microwave entrées aimed at kids, urges parents not to let young children use a microwave oven. Jackson notes that several producers of kids-oriented microwave foods imply that young children can safely prepare the products on their own.

Statistics gathered by the Consumer Product Safety Commission show a jump in microwave-related burns to children. Spills and steam burns are the most common hazards to kids using microwave ovens. In 1988, the CPSC estimates, 483 children were treated for such burns; for 1989, the estimate is 1,096.

How old should kids be before they start zapping their own meal? Lorraine D'Asta, Ph.D., a clinical and school psychologist, says that parents need to assess their child's readiness for using a microwave oven. Any child who is not ready to use a conventional oven, she argues, should not be using a microwave without supervision.