



## **Children and Firesetting:** How the Burn Center Can Help



— **NewYork-Presbyterian**  
— Weill Cornell Medical Center



## Did you know that...

- Kids under the age of 18 make up 50% of those arrested for arson.
- Recent reports show that in one year, children caused 67,000 fires that resulted in 230 deaths, 1,800 injuries and \$235 million in property damage.
- Many fires set by kids are never reported because adults don't know about them, don't want to get a child "in trouble," or think that playing with fire is "just a phase."

## Children setting fires: why is this a problem?

As kids grow up, many learn to respect the dangers of fire. Some kids, however, set fires on purpose, either out of curiosity or to get attention. Without help, these children put themselves, others, and their communities at risk of serious burns, property damage, and even death. To help kids and teens who set fires, the Burn Center at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital offers a juvenile firesetting intervention program.

## What is a juvenile firesetter intervention (JFI) program ?

A juvenile firesetter intervention program is a team approach to help kids who misuse or set fires. The goals of the Burn Center's program are to:

- Help families understand the child's use of fire

- Assist in stopping the firesetting behavior

Members of the team include a juvenile firesetting specialist, fire safety educators and behavioral health providers who work together with kids and families to help stop firesetting and address any issues that may cause this behavior.

## How does the Burn Center's JFI Program work?

Program staff will meet and speak to you and your child about:

- What he/she thinks and knows about fire
- Past firesetting
- Family, friends, and school
- Other interests

Based on the child's response, the JFI specialist will arrange for fire safety education and behavioral health referrals as needed.

## Who can attend the Burn Center's JFI Program?

Any child may be referred for screening by:

- Parents
- Teachers
- Mental health professionals
- Community agencies
- Health care and social services providers
- Juvenile justice professionals



- Law enforcement
- Fire service

### How much does the JFI Program cost?

The initial screening and fire safety education are free. If mental health services are advised, the parent/guardian will be given a partial list of providers for voluntary follow up. Making the appointment and payment for these mental health services are the responsibilities of the child's parent/guardian and are separate from this program.

### Where and when does the JFI Program take place?

Since every child is unique, staff will set up a private appointment at the Burn Center for initial screening and fire safety education.

### How do I make an appointment?

Please call (212) 746 – 5417.

### What are some fire safety tips that I can share with my family?

- Keep matches, lighters, candles, and chemicals (such as propane, gasoline, body spray, aerosol cans, perfume) out of the reach of all children.
- Teach your child not to touch matches or lighters and to call an adult right away if they find these items.



### What are some fire safety tips that I can share with my family? (continued)

- Keep young children away from candles, stoves, BBQs, campfires, and all other sources of fire. Supervise older kids around these.
- Monitor what your child is watching on TV and online. Often, homemade video clips of dangerous stunts with fire are shown on TV and posted on popular websites visited by kids. Talk to your children about the dangers of these activities.
- Create and practice a home fire escape plan.
- Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on each level of your home, and outside of the kitchen and all sleeping areas.
- Test the batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors every month. Change the batteries two times per year (when you change your clocks for daylight saving time) and anytime the devices are "chirping."

#### References:

1. US Fire Administration. The Fire Risk to Children. Topical Fire Research Series 4;8 (1-6). 2004.
2. Juvenile Firesetters: What You Can Do. FEMA/US Fire Administration. FA-245/February 2003.
3. Cole RC, Crandall R, Kourofsky CE, Sharp D, Blaakman SW et al. Juvenile Firesetting: A Community Guide to Prevention and Intervention. Pittsford, NY. 2006.
4. Stadolnik RF. Drawn to the Flame: Assessment and Treatment of Juvenile Firesetting Behavior. Professional Resource Press. FL: 2000.
5. Cole RC, Crandall R, Kourofsky CE, Sharp D, Blaakman SW et al. Juvenile Firesetting: A Community Guide to Prevention and Intervention. Fireproof Children/Prevention First, Pittsford NY. 2006.



**The William Randolph Hearst Burn Center** at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center is one of the largest and busiest burn centers in the nation. We treat nearly 5,000 patients—one-third of whom are kids—each year.

By providing all phases of treatment—from the emergency response to rehabilitation—to patients and families who have suffered a burn injury, the Burn Center provides the expertise, resources, and continuity of care needed to get the best results.

To make an appointment to see a doctor or if you would like to learn more about burn prevention, please call the Hearst Burn Center at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center:

**Main Office/Appointments:** (212) 746 – 5410

**Burn Outreach/Education:** (212) 746 – 5417

**William Randolph Hearst Burn Center at  
NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital**  
525 East 68th Street, L706, New York, NY 10065

<http://nyp.org/services/burn-center.html>

If you or your family member gets burned, call 911 and seek immediate medical attention!

*This information is brief and general. It should not be the only source of your information on this health care topic. It is not to be used or relied upon for diagnosis or treatment. It does not take the place of instructions from your doctor. Talk to your health care providers before making a health care decision.*

**NewYork-Presbyterian  
Weill Cornell Medical Center**



**MIX**  
Paper from  
responsible sources  
**FSC® C005812**

In keeping with NewYork-Presbyterian's commitment to sustainability, this publication is printed on FSC-certified paper that includes a minimum of 10 percent postconsumer fiber. The FSC-trademark identifies products that are made with fiber from well-managed forests certified by Smartwood in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council

© NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, 2010.