

Chapter 20

Preventing Kitchen Accidents

Breaking the Accident Chain

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

Although kitchen accidents seem to happen at random, safety experts estimate that 85 percent of these types of accidents occur either because of carelessness or because people do not know what to do to prevent them.

One key to preventing kitchen accidents is to learn about what safety experts call the accident chain. This is a recurring pattern, or chain, of events and behaviors associated with an accident. The four links in the accident chain are explained in the box below.



The Accident Chain

1. **Situation** This is the circumstance or event that leads up to an accident. A situation can be something seemingly innocent. Preparing a meal and placing a pot on the range are two examples of situations.
2. **Risk Factor** This may be either an isolated unsafe act or an unsafe habit. Using a kitchen knife with a dull blade or allowing a pot handle to extend over the edge of the range are two risk factors.
3. **Accident** This is the consequence that may be caused by one or more risk factors. Slicing into a finger with the dull knife is an accident. Bumping the protruding pot handle and splashing the scalding contents on yourself or someone else is another.
4. **Aftermath** This may take the form of personal injury, destruction of property, or both. The cut finger and the burn, the aftermath of the accidents described above, may require emergency medical attention.

(Continued on next page)

Thinking Critically

1. For each of the scenarios listed below, develop an accident chain by identifying the risk factor, the potential kitchen accident, and the aftermath.

a. The knife Andy was using to dice food slipped from his hand. He was afraid it would nick the new kitchen floor tile.

b. Laurie asked her lab partner to take a peek at the soup on the range. She started to lift the lid so her partner could lean closer for a look.

c. Jeremy was plugging in an electrical appliance without noticing that there was water on the counter.

2. Reflection: Why should people be concerned about kitchen safety?

For Further Study

- ◆ Research kitchen accidents. Develop a series of Power Point® slides providing information on the percentage of injuries that occur from kitchen accidents as compared to other types of home accidents. If you are able, specifically identify the kinds of kitchen accidents. Follow up your information with slides summarizing ways to prevent these accidents from happening.
- ◆ Water and electricity do not mix! Create a cartoon poster that represents this idea, and place it in the foods lab.
- ◆ Store chemicals away from food and out of children's reach. List the household chemicals in your home. What types of products did you find? What warnings or special directions did you find on the labels? Were products stored properly? What actions do you plan to take to prevent a chemical poisoning? Write a brief summary and submit it to your teacher.
- ◆ Write a fictional account, or children's narrative, in which an accident is waiting to happen, but someone successfully breaks the accident chain. Read your narrative to an elementary class, and discuss the accident and other safety tips students should follow at home.