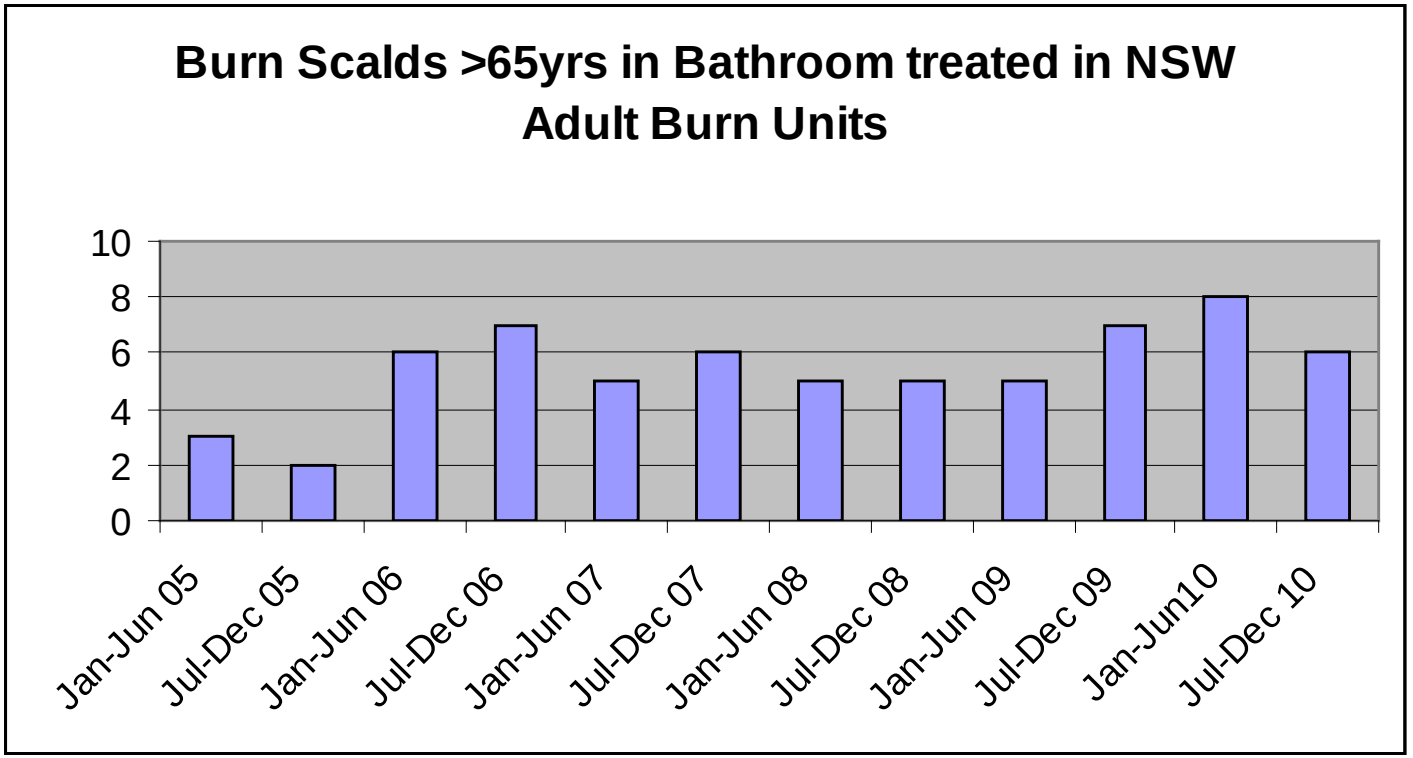
Prevention of Hot Water Scalds in the Elderly

Cheree Walker Occupational Therapy 2012

Prevalence

Graph and Statistics supplied by NSW SBIS with thanks.



Full thickness burns

- Scald burns are life threatening and result in lengthy hospital stays.
- Infection and sepsis increase the mortality rate.
- Anatomic areas requiring grafting are commonly feet, buttocks and back.

The higher the water temperature , the shorter the exposure time required to develop a full thickness burn injury.

Moritz and Henriques 1947

Type of Liquid	**Temperatures**	**Time**
Boiling water from a kettle	100^0C	Under 1 Second
Cup of hot tea/ coffee	70-75^0C	Under 1 second
Hot water from a non-regulated tap	60^0C	1 second
Hot water from a kettle 5-10 minutes after boiling	55^0C	10 seconds
Hot water from a tap with a temperature regulator.	50^0C	5 minutes

The water temperature has a degree of importance

Prevention

- **How can we improve outcomes for the elderly?**
- Installation of a tempering valve or thermostatic mixing valve to lower water outlet temperature to 50°C
- See the handout provided.
- Avoid use of baths and shower cubicles with fixed screens.
- Recommend a hob-less shower recess with shower curtain.
- This allows room to move away from the hot water source when able e.g. following an epileptic seizure

Occupational Therapy Intervention

- Consider installation of water tempering devices as part of your home visit check list and risk management strategy.

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