Best Practices in Burn Prevention

The key to burn safety is helping to reduce the chances of the injury occurring in the first place. Educating the public on burn prevention, and what to do if one does occur, will help significantly reduce the long-term impact of burn injuries on a community. But, burn prevention education is not a one-size fits all program. Knowing your target audience and burn injuries that affect your target population, will guide your selection of messages, materials and method of presentation to create safety awareness and change behaviors.

Some factors to consider when choosing or creating a program or educational materials:

1. **Use credible data to support your program**
   Once you have identified the problem or area of need, there are a number of credible sources for data in order to support your program, including the American Burn Association, the Centers for Disease Control, National Fire Protection Agency, American Red Cross, among others.

2. **Read published literature and reports**
   There are a number of published literature and reports, including Peer-Reviewed Journals, Research Reports and Community Toolboxes to provide you with additional information and resources to support your program.

3. **Communicate with burn prevention colleagues**
   The United States Fire Administration's Prevention and Public Education Exchange, American Burn Association and Vision 20/20's Symposium are examples of ways to connect with burn prevention colleagues.

4. **Use approved messages and images**
   Has the program/materials been evaluated? (e.g., formal or informal evaluation, published outcomes or results, reviewed and vetted by professional experts) Are assessment or evaluation tools incorporated into it? (e.g., pre-/post-tests, participant evaluations, long-term knowledge surveys, documented saves)

5. **Develop and disseminate low-literacy materials**
   What is the literacy and education level of your target audiences? Will pictures and images assist in getting your message across in your printed materials?

6. **Be inclusive of all target audiences**
   Determine if a broad or narrow focus (in regards to the both topical area and population/audience) is the most appropriate approach. Focus on eliminating disparities in burn prevention programs through outreach to various racial and ethnic groups; economic status; geographic setting (rural, urban, suburban); age groups; gender identity; educational attainment and disabilities.

7. **Use fear arousing communications cautiously**
   Be cautious of using images that are graphic, disturbing or distasteful. If your message or images are too graphic or extreme for your audience, your message may not be well-received.

8. **Focus on positive messaging**
   Use positive images and language in your materials as opposed to negative images and "don't" messages. Model good behavior in your materials as best you can.

9. **Engage appropriate partners**
   Burn prevention program partners might include: School teachers/administrators, Older adult staffers (Meals on Wheels, senior centers), Health department personnel, Disability experts, Academicians/researchers, Health and medical professionals, Faith-based community members, Business and civic leaders.