

Attention ... Fire Burns !!



What are burns?

Burns are skin damage caused by contact with fire, heat, electricity, radiation or caustic chemicals. Burns are classified according to the depth and extent of the skin damage, in the following way:

- **FIRST DEGREE BURNS:** the skin is red, painful and very sensitive to touch. The damaged skin may be slightly moist from leakage of the fluid in the deeper layers of the skin.
- **SECOND DEGREE BURNS:** the damage is deeper and blisters usually appear on the skin. The skin is still painful and sensitive.
- **THIRD DEGREE BURNS:** the tissues in all layers of the skin are dead. Usually there are no blisters. The burn surface can appear normal, white, black (charred), or bright red from blood in the bottom of the wound. Damage to skin nerves can mean it is quite painless. The burned skin lacks sensation to touch. A skin graft is usually necessary for significant areas.

First aid for burns

- The first thing to do is to limit the extent of the damage, and prevent the burn from becoming worse.
- The burnt area must be cooled by being placed under cold running water.
- The water must not be unpleasantly cold.
- The damaged area must stay under running water for at least 1 hour, or longer if the pain has not stopped.
- Up to 4 hours of this treatment can be beneficial.
- First degree burns, do not require this treatment.

Which burns need treatment by health professional?

- Burns that are bigger than the palm of the hand.
- Burns on the face, neck, hands and in the groin.
- Most second degree burns.
- All third degree burns.

Remember that it can be difficult to distinguish between 2nd and 3rd degree burns, **so always have a nurse or a doctor, check all the most minor burns.**

- If possible, keep pouring water over the burn on the way to the doctor, or use clean soaking wet towels.
- Do not lance the blisters yourself.
- Never apply ointment to burns or try other folk remedies, water is the only thing that should be used.
- Do not forget to have a tetanus injection if you have not had a booster within the last 10 years.



DANGER !!!
DON'T TOUCH HOT POT !!!

What complications can occur?

When the skin is burned it loses its ability to protect, which increases the risk of infections. So it is important that the damaged area be thoroughly cleansed within the first 6 hours, and that the area is kept clean while it is healing. If after a few days, there are signs of an infection (the skin is becoming increasingly red, hot and swollen), contact a doctor or your practice nurse. Severe burns can cause scarring. In cases of extensive severe burns, the body may lose large quantities of fluid. This can disturb the blood circulation and cause problems with the body's salt balance.



What can be done to prevent burns?

- The kitchen is the most dangerous room of the house, and the most likely place for burns and scalds to occur.
- When cooking, keep small children away from hot drinks, pans and kettles, barbecues and other open flames.
- Remember that barbecues can suddenly spit flames when inflammable liquids are poured over them.
- When there are small children in the house, fill baths by running the cold tap first.
- Never throw water over oil fires, such as in a chip pan, because this will cause a fire explosion that can have severe consequences. Instead the fire should be smothered by covering the pan with a damp cloth.
- Buy a proper fire smothering blanket and keep it somewhere in the kitchen where it is easily accessible.

REMEMBER:



Don't

- Do not commence first aid before ensuring your own safety (switch off electrical current, wear gloves for chemical etc.).
- Do not apply paste, oil, or raw cotton to the burnt area.
- Do not apply ice.
- Do not open the blisters.
- Do not apply any material directly to the wound as this increases the risk of infection.
- Avoid application of topical medication until the patient has been placed under appropriate medical care.

Do

- Stop the burning process by removing clothing.
- Apply cold water or allow the burned area to remain in contact with cold water for some time.
- In flame injuries, extinguish the flames by allowing the patient to roll on the ground, or by applying a blanket or using water or other fire extinguishing liquids.
- In chemical burns, remove or dilute the chemical agent by copiously irrigating the wound with water.
- Obtain medical care.