Burns First Aid

Information for Patients, Residents and Carers

What is a burn?

The Fiona Wood Foundation defines burns as 'an injury to any layer of the skin and are caused by extreme heat or cold, contact with electricity, chemicals, friction or radiation'.

Burn first aid - anyone can do it!

If a burn does occur, appropriate first aid is important to reduce the extent of the injury. Following these steps can help to get the best possible healing outcome:

1. Keep safe – stop the burn as soon as possible

- ✓ If on fire: Stop-drop-roll
- ✓ If electrical: Turn off current
- ✓ If chemical: Remove the burning agent and irrigate with water
- ✗ Never put yourself at risk.

2. Cool the burn

- ✓ You should place the affected area in cool water or under gently running cool water for 20 minutes. Remember this can be done up to 3 hours after the injury
- ✗ Never place a child in a bath full of cold water. This can cause them to go into shock and other complications.

- ✗ **DO NOT** use ice, butter, oil or lotions for burn first aid.

3. Remove any clothing and jewellery

- ✓ Remove any jewellery which is near the burn site if you can, without causing any damage to the burn
- ✗ If clothing is adhered to the skin trim it or leave in place and seek medical aid. You should leave this for medical staff to remove.

4. Cover the burn

- ✓ Loosely cover with a wet towel or cloth, dressing or plastic cling film
- ✗ Do not wrap with plastic cling film circumferentially or apply to the face.

5. Keep the person warm

- ✓ Use a blanket or layers of clothing
- ✗ Avoid putting these directly on the burn.

6. Medical help

- ✓ If it is an emergency call 000
- ✓ If the burn is bigger than a 20 cent piece, is in the airways, or on the face, hands, feet or genitals, seek medical aid
- ✓ If the burn becomes infected or is slow to heal.

Further information

- Never burst or pop any blisters on a burn, as this can lead to an infection, see your health professional

- Most small burns will heal themselves. Superficial, epidermal burns can be left uncovered unless they are in a place where it is difficult to keep clean. Use a non-adhesive (non-sticky) dressing for temporary coverage if you need to cover a burn or scald. Wound Innovations or your health professional can guide you on wound care

- If you have not had a full course of tetanus immunisation or if your boosters are not up to date contact your health practitioner.

Signs of burn wound infection

- Increasing pain

- Increasing redness around the burn

- New swelling in or around the burn

- Fevers (above 37.5ºC) or you become unwell may indicate there is infection.

If you have any of the above please see your health professional.

Contact Information

Wound Innovations: 1300 224 034

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References

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