



Emergency Care for Burns

For all burns

Stop the burning process. Remove all clothing and diapers from around the burned area. These will retain heat, hide underlying burns, and increase the damage to the skin. If material is adherent (stuck) to the skin, do not try to remove it. Cool the area with cool water and seek medical attention. Jewelry and metal such as belt buckles and zippers also need to be removed.

Run cool - NOT cold water - over the burn area for a few minutes.

- Do **not** apply ice to the burn. Ice can lower the body temperature and make the burn worse.
- **DO** keep the area clean to prevent infection by gently washing with mild antimicrobial soap several times a day. Rinse thoroughly.
- Do **not** apply creams, ointments, or salves. Such products hold heat in the tissue, making the burn deeper.
- **DO** cover open areas with a clean, loose dressing. *For superficial burns only*, such as sunburns where the burn has not penetrated the outer skin layer, you may use a perfume-free moisturizing lotion.
- Do **not** break any blisters until seen by a physician.
- **DO** consult with your family physician or local burn center if the burn does not heal in two to three days or if signs of infection appear.

Call your physician or go to your local emergency department for the following:

- Burns bigger than the size of the person's palm.
- Burns that are circumferential (wrap around an arm or leg).
- Burns that involve the face, airway, hands, feet, major joints, or genital area.
- **ALL** chemical and electrical burns (since damage might not be immediately obvious).
- Burns occurring in an enclosed space, such as a house or car (because there may be smoke inhalation).
- Burns that are white, gray, leathery or painless.
- Burns of any size that develop redness or red streaks around the area of injury.