

Burns



Burns are injuries to body tissue caused by heat, chemicals, electricity, sunlight, and other sources. These can range from minor medical problems to life-threatening emergencies.

Types of Burns

Burns are classified into first, second, and third degree groups, depending on the depth and severity of their penetration into the skin's surface.

- **First-degree burn:** only affects the outer layer of skin (epidermis). It may cause redness and pain.
- **Second-degree burn:** affects the epidermis and the second layer of skin (dermis). It may cause swelling and make the skin appear red, white, or mottled. Blisters may form, and the pain may be severe.
- **Third-degree burn:** reaches the fatty layer beneath the skin. The burned areas may be black, brown, or white. The skin may have a leathery appearance (look and feel like leather). These burns can destroy nerves, causing numbness.

Treatment

- For third degree and some second degree burns, patients need more fluids to maintain blood pressure and prevent shock.



- For major burns, medical personnel often remove the burned tissue and cover the burn wound with a skin graft, artificial skin products, and lab-grown epidermis.
- People with minor burns may be treated at a local hospital. In contrast, severe burns may be transferred to a hospital with a dedicated burn unit. Severe burns include those that are highly likely to affect physical and psychological recovery. Exercise of the injured body parts is necessary to maintain functionality and range of motion.

First Aid

For minor burns:

- Protect the burned person from further injury.
- Check if the burned person is breathing.
- Remove jewelry, belts, or other tight items.



- Protect the burn from any pressure or friction.
- Elevate the burned area.
- Check for symptoms of shock.

Before providing first aid, it is necessary to identify the type of burn the person has. If you are unsure, treat it as a major burn. It is important to note that severe burns require immediate medical attention. Therefore, call 911 immediately.

Complications

Some complications of deep or widespread burns may include:

- Infection.
- Fluid loss, including low blood volume (hypovolemia).
- A dangerously low body temperature (hypothermia).
- Breathing problems due to the entry of hot air flames or smoke.
- Scars or ridged areas caused by excessive growth of scar tissue.
- Bone and joint problems, such as when scar tissue causes shortening and tightening of the skin, muscles, or tendons.



Prevention

Recommendations to reduce the risk of burns at home:

- Keep hot foods and drinks away from the edge of the table.
- Do not leave hot drinks, pots, or pans unattended near children or pets.
- Install smoke alarms in your home.
- Remove electrical cords from the floor and keep them out of reach.
- Keep fire extinguishers in designated areas throughout the home.
- Warn others when appliances, such as the stove, iron, or dishes, may be hot.

Social and Emotional Aspects

For recommendations, tools, and resources on how you and your family can address the emotional and physical concerns that arise during your treatment, visit your primary care physician or contact:

Medical Advice Line

1-844-347-7801

TTY/TDD 1-844-347-7804

APS Health

787-641-9133

References:

<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000030.htm>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/burns/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20370545>

Prepared by Licensed Health Educators.
Revised March 2025.

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