

Topic: Burns

The term “burn” means more than just the sensation associated with the injury. Burns are one of the more common injuries that occur in the home, especially with children. They can also be a workplace hazard. Burns can be caused by many things such as

Heat (Thermal): This can include heat sources such as fire, hot liquids or steam. It can also be hot glass or metal or any hot object.

Radiation: The most common type of radiation burn is sunburn caused by ultraviolet radiation. High exposure to x-rays can also cause radiation burns. Radiation treatment for cancer is another cause. High power radio transmitters can cause burns as the body absorbs the radio frequency and converts it to heat.

Chemical Burns: Chemical burns happen when the body comes into contact with an irritant such as acids or bases. Chemical burns are sometimes referred to as a caustic burn.

Electrical Burns: These are caused by contact with an energy source or lightning.

Burns are classified into three major classifications or degrees. Each degree is based on the severity of damage to the skin.

First Degree:

This is the least severe and affects the outermost layer of the skin. The skin will appear red and may have minor inflammation or swelling. There may be pain, and dry peeling skin as it heals.

Second Degree:

These burns are more serious because the damage extends beyond the top layer of skin. This causes the skin to blister and become extremely red and sore. There will be blisters and some blisters may pop open and present a risk of infection.

Third Degree:

These are the worst type of burns. They extend through every layer of skin. The damage can even reach the bloodstream or organs and bones. Third degree burns may cause little or no pain because of nerve damage.

Treatment:

For a first degree burn apply cool water and cover with a clean dressing. Remove rings and other tight items from the burned area before swelling occurs. If needed take an over the counter pain reliever.

For a second degree burn cool the burn with cool water. Do not try to remove clothing that is stuck to the burned area. Do not break the blisters. Apply an antibiotic ointment and cover with a non-stick gauze bandage and seek medical attention.

For a third degree burn go to the hospital right away. Do not try to remove clothing that is stuck to the burned area. Raise the burned area above the level of the heart if possible. You can cover the burned area with a cool wet sterile bandage until you receive medical help.

Electrical burns need medical attention immediately. Electrical burns cause more sub dermal damage which may not be visible.

Chemical burns should be flushed with large amounts of water. Take off jewellery or clothing that has the chemical on it. Do not apply ointment as this could cause a chemical reaction. Seek medical attention.