

Burns

WHAT IS IT?

First degree burn—This minor burn affects only the outer layer of the skin (epidermis). It may cause redness, swelling and pain. It usually heals with first-aid measures within several days to a week. Sunburn is a classic example.

Second degree burn—This type of burn affects both the epidermis and the second layer of skin (dermis). It may cause red, white or splotchy skin, pain, and swelling. And the wound often looks wet or moist. Blisters may develop, and pain can be severe. Deep second-degree burns can cause scarring.

Third degree burn—This burn reaches into the fat layer beneath the skin. Burned areas may be charred black or white. The skin may look waxy or leathery. Third-degree burns can destroy nerves, causing numbness.

WHEN TO SEEK EMERGENCY CARE

- Burns that cover the hands, feet, face, groin, buttocks, a major joint or a large area of the body
- Deep burns, which means burns affecting all layers of the skin and even other tissues
- Burns caused by chemicals or electricity
- Difficulty breathing or burns to the airway

The information presented here is not intended to be used for the diagnosis of a health problem or as a substitute for consulting a licensed medical professional. When using an Over-the-Counter medication please be sure to follow the package instructions.

Contact Health Services if you have any additional questions, concerns or to make an appointment.

SELF CARE

To treat minor burns, follow these steps:

- **Cool the burn.** Run cool (not cold) tap water over the burn for 10 to 15 minutes or until the pain eases. Don't use ice. Putting ice directly on a burn can cause further damage to the tissue.
- **Remove rings or other tight items from the burned area.** Try to do this quickly and gently, before the area swells.
- **Don't break small blisters.** If blisters break, gently clean the area with mild soap and water, apply an antibiotic ointment, and cover it with a nonstick gauze bandage.
- **Apply moisturizer or aloe vera lotion or gel.** This may soothe the area and prevent dryness as the wound heals.
- **If needed, take an over-the-counter pain reliever.** Nonprescription products include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others), naproxen (Aleve) and acetaminophen (Tylenol, others).

Whether your burn was minor or serious, use sunscreen and moisturizer regularly once the wound is healed.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE:

Minor burns can be cared for at home, but make an appointment if you experience:

- Large blisters
- Signs of infection, such as oozing from the wound, increased pain, redness and swelling
- A burn or blister that doesn't heal in several weeks