

Burns

A Guide for Patients/Families



This brochure provides information about Burns, degrees of burns and instructions for changing dressing of a burnt wound. It is designed to respond to the question most frequently asked by patients and family members.



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What is a burn?

Injuries from hot water, fire, sun, stoves, heaters etc. are called burns. They are commonly labelled first, second or third degree according to the severity or amount of tissue damage.

- **First degree** burns appear red and may have blisters with clear fluid
- **Second degree** burns have a mottled red/white appearance
- **Third degree** burns are the most serious. They are deeper, look raw, charred or whitish. Even though third degree burns are deeper, they are less painful because the nerve endings have been destroyed.

Dressing

If your burn is extensive, it may have to be redressed at the hospital. If it is minor or healing well, the nurse will show you how to change the dressing at home. Your dressing can be changed by:

- The nurse in the Consulting Clinic (CC) Community Health Centre (CHC)
- The nurse in Emergency Room
- The visiting nurse from the home health nursing programme
- Yourself at home.

When Changing the Dressing at Home

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap;
- Remove the old dressing. If it is sticking to the wound then soak it in clean warm water for several minutes.

- Gently clean the area with warm water and a mild non-perfumed soap.

Do not purposefully pinch blisters, they provide natural protection to the injured skin.

- Gently pat the area dry with a soft clean towel
- Apply the prescribed medicine to the burn area
- Apply a new, sterile dressing to the area as explained by your doctor/nurse.
- Change the dressing daily or as instructed. Keep the wound covered until the skin is well healed and there are no moist areas.
- Prescribed medication may be used before dressing.
- Keep swollen arms/ legs elevated.

Fluids

Take extra fluids for the next 24-48 hours to replace fluid loss due to burn.

Watch for Infection

Infection is a common complication in burns because the skin is injured, and therefore open to contamination by bacteria.

Contact your doctor or visit the Emergency Room if you see any of the following signs:

- If the area is more red and swollen after the first 24 hours.
- The pain is increasing after the first or second day.

- Red streaks appear on the skin near the wound.
- Fever occurs without another obvious cause.
- Foul smell, greenish pus drains from the area.

For further information, please call:

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