

# Burns & scalds



Appropriate first aid must be used to treat any burns or scalds as soon as possible. This will limit the amount of damage to your skin. You should use the following first aid techniques to yourself or to another person who has been burnt:



- Stop the burning process as soon as possible. This may mean removing the person from the area, dousing flames with water or smothering flames with a blanket. Do not put yourself at risk of getting burnt as well
- Remove any clothing or jewellery near the burnt area of skin. However, don't try to remove anything that is stuck to the burnt skin because this could cause more damage
- Cool the burn with cool or lukewarm water for 10–30 minutes, ideally within 20 minutes of the injury occurring. Never use ice, iced water or any creams or greasy substances like butter
- Keep yourself or the person warm. Use a blanket or layers of clothing, but make sure they don't touch the injured area. Keeping warm will prevent hypothermia, when a person's body temperature drops below 35C (95F). This is a risk if you are cooling a large burnt area, particularly in young children and elderly people
- Cover the burn with cling film. Put the cling film in a layer over the burn, rather than wrapping it around a limb. A clean, clear plastic bag can be used for burns on your hand
- Treat the pain from a burn with paracetamol or ibuprofen. Always check the manufacturer's instructions when using over-the-counter medication. Children under 16 years of age should not be given aspirin

## Dressing

Electrical burns may not look serious, but they can be very damaging. If the person has been injured by a low-voltage source (up to 220–240 volts) like a domestic electricity supply, safely switch off the power supply or remove the person from the electrical source using a non-conductive material. This is a material that does not conduct electricity, like a wooden stick or a wooden chair. Do not approach a person who is connected to a high-voltage source (1,000 volts or more).

## Chemical burns

Chemical burns can be very damaging and require immediate medical attention. If possible, find out what chemical caused the burn and tell the healthcare professionals at A&E. If you are helping someone else, wear appropriate protective clothing, then:

- Remove any clothing that has the chemical on it from the person who has been burnt
- If the chemical is dry, brush it off their skin
- Use running water to remove any traces of the chemical from the burnt area



For more information, help and support go to [www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk](http://www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk) or visit NHS Choices at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Choose the right care**

# What to do next...



## Choose care at home if...

- You have a minor burn or scald
- Follow the instructions above and the burn or scald will heal



## Choose your GP or GP out-of-hours service if...

- The person is pregnant
- The person is over 60 years of age
- The person is under five years of age
- The person has a medical condition like heart, lung or liver disease, or diabetes (a long-term condition caused by too much glucose in the blood)
- The person has a weakened immune system (the body's defence system), for example because of HIV or AIDS or because they're having chemotherapy for cancer



## Call 999 A&E if...

- The person has other injuries that need treating or is going into shock (signs include cold, clammy skin, sweating, rapid, shallow breathing and weakness or dizziness)
- The pain gets worse even after pain medication
- The burn is a chemical or electrical burn (see above)
- The burn is large or deep – any burn bigger than the person's hand
- There is a full thickness burns of any size – these burns cause white or charred skin
- There are partial thickness burns on the face, hands, arms, feet, legs or genitals – these are burns that cause blisters



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