

Burn Care

How Common Are Burns In Children?

Each year, over 23,000 American children are hospitalized, and over 1500 die from burn injuries. Burns can be caused by heat, caustic chemicals, electricity, sun, or radiation. The most common burns are scald burns and sunburns. About 15% of Caucasians have skin that never tans but only burns. The big risk factors for sunburn are red hair, blond hair, blue eyes, green eyes, or freckles.

What Are The Burn Types?

Types	Common Causes	Skin Characteristics	Expected Course
First-Degree Burn	Sunburns, mild scald burns	Pink or red, dry, painful	Pain resolves in 1 ~ 2 days, heals in 3 ~ 5 days. May begin to peel within 1 week
Second-Degree Burn	Severe sunburns, most scald burns	Deep pink or red with blisters, very painful	Blister will pop (usually in 2 ~ 3 days) then completely heals in 2 ~ 4 weeks.
Third-Degree Burn	Flames, electricity, wood stoves, irons, space heaters	White, charred, leathery, painless	Require hospitalization & surgical treatment

When Do I Call The Doctor?

- ◆ Any burn (other than sunburn) that covers more than 5% of the body
- ◆ Any burn in a child less than age 1
- ◆ Any burn with blisters covering an area larger than a palm
- ◆ Any blisters on the hands, feet, face, or genitals
- ◆ Any burn encircling an arm or a leg
- ◆ Any electrical burn
- ◆ Any possibility of smoke inhalation
- ◆ Any burn with white, charred, non-painful skin
- ◆ Severe pain or refuses to eat/drink

What Do I Do For A Burn?

First-degree burn: First, run cold water or place a cool water-soaked clean washrag over the burn. Then give ibuprofen three times daily for the next several days. Do not place any gels or creams on the wound until the pain is gone; at that time, Aloe Vera cream, pure honey, or even Preparation H™ can be used to help soothe and relieve the itch of healing skin. Do not use milk, butter, or lard on a burn, for they will introduce bacteria to the wound. Avoid first-aid creams or sprays because they often contain benzocaine that can cause an allergic reaction.

Second-degree burn: Again, use cold compresses and ibuprofen. If instructed by the physician, use an antibacterial ointment (such as Silvadene™ or Bactroban Cream™) twice

daily for the first 5 days. Dress the wound once or twice daily the first 2 ~ 3 days.

Methods include:

- ◆ Soak sterile gauze lightly in sterile saline then wrap the burn loosely, followed by a second layer of dry gauze loosely taped.
- ◆ Wrap burn in Xerofoam gauze (vaseline soaked sterile gauze), again following with a second layer of dry gauze loosely taped.
- ◆ If burn is very moist, physician may recommend a type of sterile non-adhesive gauze known as Telfa™ to be applied and loosely taped.

Keep the burn elevated as much as possible to reduce swelling. Fevers are common in the first 24 hours after a second-degree burn. Do not apply any other gels or creams to the burn until the blisters are gone and the wound is well-granulated. Then, as above, the use of aloe vera, pure honey, or Preparation H may help with itch.

Be sure your child is up to date on their immunizations, most notably tetanus; burns are very susceptible to becoming infected with this bacteria. Keep the child drinking lots of fluids, twice what they might normally drink. Encourage a low-volume, high-protein diet to improve wound healing, and have your child take a multivitamin rich in Vitamins A, C, and E as well as zinc and copper. Do not take any supplemental iron while recovering from a burn.

Does Sunburn Cause Skin Cancer?

Repeated sunburns increase the risk of skin cancer and each blistering sunburn doubles the risk of developing malignant melanoma, which is the most serious type of skin cancer. Although skin cancer occurs in adults, it is caused by the sun exposure and sunburns that occurred during childhood. The best way to prevent skin cancer is to prevent sunburn.

How Do I Prevent Burns?

- ◆ Minimize sun exposure between 10am and 2pm
- ◆ SPF 15 Sunscreen for any sun exposure longer than 15 minutes. Apply 30 minutes before exposure to the sun to give it time to penetrate the skin. Reapply every 3 to 4 hours, as well as immediately after swimming or profuse sweating. A "waterproof" sunscreen stays on for about 30 minutes in water.
- ◆ Wear protective clothing, such as a wide-brimmed hat
- ◆ Protect your child's eyes. Years of exposure to ultraviolet light increase the risk of cataracts.
- ◆ Don't let overcast days give you a false sense of security. Over 70% of the sun's rays still get through the clouds
- ◆ Set your hot water heater at 120 degrees or less
- ◆ Always keep stovetop pots on the back burner
- ◆ Never place hot coffee or tea within a child's reach
- ◆ Never leave a hot iron or curling iron within a child's reach
- ◆ Cover every electrical outlet and cord
- ◆ Never allow your baby to use a wheeled baby walker
- ◆ Have smoke detectors & a fire extinguisher on every floor
- ◆ Keep vaporizers & steam machines out of reach
- ◆ Keep matches & lighters out of a child's reach
- ◆ Never allow a child unsupervised use of fireworks