

Burn Injury

Burns and fires are the sixth most common cause of accidental death in children and adults, and account for nearly 4,500 adult and child deaths per year.

Classifying burns

Burns are classified in two ways: Method and degree of burn.

Methods include:

- Thermal - including flame, radiation, or excessive heat from fire, steam, and hot liquids and hot objects.
- Chemical - including various acids, bases, and caustics.
- Electrical - including electrical current and lightning.
- Light - burns caused by intense light sources or ultraviolet light, which includes sunlight.
- Radiation - such as from nuclear sources. Ultraviolet light is also a source of radiation burns.

Treatment of burns

1. Cool a burn with water, get cool water on the burn as soon as you can or put cool water-soaked cloths on the burn. If possible, avoid icy cold water and ice cubes. Such measures could cause further damage to the burned skin.
2. Never apply ointment, grease (oil or lard), petroleum jelly, tooth paste or butter to the burned area. Applying such products, actually confine the heat of the burn to the skin and do not allow the damaged area to cool.
3. The one exception to the "Cool a Burn" method is when the burn is caused by lime powder. In that case, carefully brush the lime off the skin completely and then flush the area with water.
4. On the scene, when clothes catch on fire, the flames can be distinguished by a blanket or coat may be used. The victim falls to the floor or ground and roll "stop, drop and roll"; standing still would force the victim to breathe flames and smoke, and running would fan the flames. Then the burned area and adherent clothing are soaked with cold water to cool the wound, other clothing and jewelry should be removed.
5. The burn should be covered as soon as possible to minimize bacterial contamination and decrease pain, sterile dressing are the best, but any clean, dry cloth can be used as an emergency dressing.
6. If a chemical gets in or near the eyes , the eyes should be flushed with cool water.