

First Aid - Burns

Toolbox Talk

Worksite emergencies can happen quickly, and everyone should know what to do - everyone should know first aid.

Burns are a specific type of soft tissue injury. Although burns caused by heat are the most common, certain chemicals can also cause burns. Electrical current can burn the body internally and externally, while radiation from the sun can cause sunburn.

Heat Burns

When the burn is caused by heat, it first destroys the top layer of skin. If it continues to burn, the second layer of skin is injured or destroyed. The severity of the burn depends on the temperature of whatever caused the burn, the length of time the victim is exposed to it, the burn's location on the body, the size of the burn, and the victim's age and medical condition. A burn should be considered critical if:

- breathing difficulty occurs
- more than one body part is affected
- the head, neck, hands, feet, or genitals are involved
- a child or an elderly person is the victim
- it results from chemicals, explosions, or electricity.

To care for a heat burn, follow these basic steps:

- Stop the burn by putting out the flame or removing the victim from the source of the burn
- Cool the burned area with large amounts of cool water
- Cover the burn with dry, clean dressings

Chemical Burns

For chemical burns to the skin or eyes, flush with large amounts of cool running water for at least 15 minutes or until professional medical help arrives. If only one eye has been exposed to the chemical, flush the affected eye from the nose outward to prevent washing the chemical into the unaffected eye. To prevent the chemical from continuing to burn the skin, remove contaminated clothing immediately, particularly clothing with elastic bands or areas where a chemical may settle.

Electrical Burns

The severity of an electrical burn depends on how long the body is in contact with the electrical current, the strength of the current, the type of current, and the direction the current takes through the body. With an electrical burn, the victim may have two wounds, one where the current entered the body and one where it exits. The burns may look minor, but the underlying tissue may be severely damaged. Furthermore, with an electrical burn, the victim may have other problems, such as breathing difficulty, cardiac arrest, possible fractures, or a spinal injury. Call for professional medical help immediately.

To care for a victim of an electrical burn until professional medical help arrives:

- check to see if the source of the electricity has been disconnected
- check for breathing, pulse, and other injuries
- do not move the victim
- cover with a dry, sterile dressing, but do not cool the burn with water

Sunburn

A sunburn can be painful, but is rarely life-threatening. To care for a mild sunburn, cool the burn with water; then check with your doctor or pharmacist about products.

Burn Care

| Do | Don't |
|---|--|
| Cool a burn by flushing with cool water, except in cases of electrical burns | Apply ice directly to any burn unless it is very minor |
| Cover the burn with a dry sterile dressing | Touch a burn with anything except a clean covering |
| Keep the victim comfortable and protect them from being chilled or overheated | Remove pieces of cloth that stick to the burn |
| | Try to clean a severe burn |
| | Break blisters |
| | Use any kind of ointment or butter on a severe burn |

