Burns

Description/Introduction

Burns can damage skin or even layers of fat, muscle and bone underneath the skin. They are classified by their depth; in general, the deeper the burn, the more severe it is.

Call 9-1-1 for any critical burn, such as:

- Any burn that involves the head, neck, mouth or nose or causes trouble breathing.
- Any burn that covers more than one body part or covers a large area.
- Any burn to the hands, feet or genitals.
- Any chemical or electrical burn.
- Any burn that was caused by an explosion.
- Any burn that involves a child (unless the burn is very mild).

Thermal Burns (Heat Burns)

What to Look For

- Red, brown, black or white skin
- Pain
- Swelling
- Blisters

Care

- Remove the source of the heat. If the child’s clothes are on fire, have the child “stop, drop and roll” to put out the flames.
- Cool the burn by rinsing it with large amounts of cool running water.
- Cover the burn loosely with sterile gauze.
- Care for shock if necessary.
- Tell the parents what happened.
Chemical Burns

**What to Look For**

- Chemical on the skin
- Inflamed or red skin, or skin that is an unusual color
- Pain, burning or stinging

**Care**

- Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.
- Remove the chemical from the skin.

If the chemical is dry:

- Put on gloves.
- Remove clothing that is contaminated by the chemical.
- Brush the chemical off the skin using a towel, brushing away from the child’s body and away from yourself.
- Rinse the area with a large amount of cool water.

If the chemical is wet:

- Put on gloves.
- Remove clothing that is contaminated by the chemical.
- Rinse the area with a large amount of cool water for at least 20 minutes or until help arrives, rinsing away from the child’s body and away from yourself.

Electrical Burns

**What to Look For**

- Nearby power source
- Burn marks on the skin (entry and exit of the current)
- Unconsciousness
- Dazed, confused behavior
- Weak or irregular heartbeat, or no heartbeat
- Difficulty breathing

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Care

- Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.
- Turn the power off at its source (such as the main circuit breaker). Do not go near downed power lines; if the scene is unsafe, wait for help to arrive.
- Be prepared to give CPR
- Care for shock if necessary
- Care for the burns as though they were thermal burns

Radiation Burns (Sunburns)

What to Look For

- Red skin
- Pain
- Swelling
- Blisters

Care

- Reassure the child.
- Protect the skin from additional damage by moving out of the sun or applying sunscreen.
- Care for the burn as you would a thermal burn.
- Care for blisters, if necessary.
- Tell the parents what happened.