

Health: First Aid

Burns

Burns have a variety of causes, including:

- Scalding from hot, boiling liquids
- Chemical burns
- Electrical burns
- Fires, including flames from matches, candles, and lighters
- Excessive sun exposure

Any of these can cause all degrees of burns. Chemical and electrical burns warrant immediate medical attention because they can affect the inside of the body, even if skin damage is minor.

1st-Degree Burn (red, non-blistered skin)

Minimal skin damage or “superficial burns” because they affect the outermost layer of skin.

Signs include:

- Redness
- Minor inflammation (swelling)
- Pain
- Dry, peeling skin (occurs as the burn heals)

Treatment:

- Soak the wound in cool water for five minutes or longer
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain relief
- Apply aloe vera gel or cream to soothe the skin
- Use an antibiotic ointment and loose gauze to protect the affected area

Don't use ice; this may make the damage worse. Never apply cotton balls to a burn because the small fibers can stick to the injury and increase the risk of infection. Avoid home remedies like butter as these are not proven to be effective.

2nd-Degree Burn (blisters and some thickening of the skin)

Second-degree burns are more serious because the damage extends beyond the top layer of skin.

Signs include:

- Blister
- Extremely red and sore
- Some blisters pop open, giving the burn a wet appearance.

You can generally treat a mild second-degree burn by:

- Running the skin under cool water for 15 minutes or longer
- Taking over-the-counter pain medication (acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
- Applying antibiotic cream to blisters

3rd-Degree Burn (widespread thickness with a white, leathery appearance)

They cause the most damage, extending through every layer of skin. The damage can even reach the bloodstream, major organs, and bones, which can lead to death.

Depending on the cause, third-degree burns cause the skin to look:

- Waxy and white
- Charred
- Dark brown
- Raised and leathery

Never attempt to self-treat a third-degree burn. **Call 911 immediately.**

Broken Bones

Signs of a broken bone include one or more of the following:

- Intense pain at the site of the injury that worsens with movement
- Swelling, numbness, or bluish color of the injured area
- Deformity of the limb or joint if the injury occurred in the arm or leg
- Bone protruding through the skin
- Heavy bleeding at the injury site

First Aid Care

- Stop any bleeding. Apply pressure to the wound with a sterile bandage, a clean cloth, or a clean piece of clothing.
- While waiting for medical care, give first aid treatment for shock if the victim has symptoms such as dizziness, weakness, pale and clammy skin, shortness of breath, and increased heart rate. The person should lie quietly with the feet elevated about 12 inches. Cover him or her with a blanket to maintain body warmth.
- Immobilize the injured area if you will be moving the victim. Do not move them if there is a back or neck injury. Make a splint by folding a piece of cardboard or newspaper or a magazine, then placing it gently under the limb. Carefully tie the splint to the injured area with pieces of cloth.
- Apply a cold compress or ice in a plastic bag to the injured area. Make sure to place a cloth between the skin and the ice so you don't damage the skin.