

Burns and scalds

Most minor burns occur in the home – for example, after touching a hot oven or spilling hot water. The skin turns red and the burn feels sore. Deeper burns tend to blister and are usually swollen and painful. Severe burns, which damage deeper layers of skin and sometimes the fat and nerves underneath, may look gray and charred. There may be little or no pain. They cause fluid loss and may lead to shock (*see* opposite page).

WARNING



Call 911 if:

- A burn is near the mouth or throat, or is extensive or deep
- There are signs of shock, breathing problems, or a victim becomes unconscious

Seek medical advice

Arrange to see a doctor if:

- A child has a burn
- A burn is on the hands, face, feet, or genitals
- You are unsure about the severity of a burn
- The burn is an electrical or chemical burn

What you can do yourself

For both minor and more serious burns, it is important to act quickly to make the victim safe and take the heat out of the burn.

Severe burns

- Move the victim away from the source of the heat as quickly as you can.



- Take immediate steps to cool the burn (*see* PRACTICAL TECHNIQUE, right).

- Watch the victim carefully for symptoms of shock (*see* opposite page) and treat if necessary. If the victim becomes unconscious (*see* p.168), be ready to start CPR (*see* pp.170–171).

- Take or send the victim to the hospital.

Minor burns



- Take immediate steps to cool the burn (*see* PRACTICAL TECHNIQUE, right).

- While a burn is healing, don't break any blisters that appear. Take acetaminophen (*see* p.177) or ibuprofen (*see* p.185) if the burn is still painful.

- If a burn itches in the later stages of healing, apply moisturizers (*see* p.187) to soothe the skin and prevent it from drying out.



PRACTICAL TECHNIQUE

Cooling a burn

Follow these steps to take the heat out of a burn as soon as possible. Use them for minor burns and to cool a more serious burn while you wait for help.

- 1 *Hold the burned area under cold running water for at least 10 minutes. If water isn't available, use cold, harmless liquids such as milk or canned drinks. Do not use ice.*



- 2 *Once the burn has cooled, gently remove anything that might constrict the area if it starts to swell, such as clothing, jewelry, watches, belts, or shoes.*

CAUTION: Don't try to remove clothing or material that is stuck to burned skin. Cut around the burn and seek medical attention.

- 3 *Pat the area dry. Don't put lotions or creams on the burn. Cover it with a sterile, nonadherent dressing or any clean, nonfluffy material, and bandage loosely. Or put plastic wrap lengthwise along the arm to protect the burn.*

