



How to treat minor burn injuries at home

There are many things in your house that can cause burns. Small children are most at risk because they like to grab things and do not know what is dangerous. However, thousands of older children get burned at home every year, too.

The following are some steps to take if a child in your house gets burned.

Check to see how serious the burn is

Burns fall into three groups based on their depth. A superficial burn, formerly referred to as first-degree, is the most minor and causes redness, swelling and mild pain. A partial-thickness burn, formerly second-degree, causes blisters, as well as redness and swelling, and is very painful. A full-thickness burn, formerly called third degree, is the most serious. This burn may peel, appear white or black and feel numb. Some very serious burns can cause a child to feel faint, weak or have trouble breathing.

Only superficial burns, or small partial-thickness burns should be treated at home. A doctor should see a child with larger partial- thickness burns. Call 911 for immediate help if a full-thickness burn occurs.

Follow these steps to treat a minor burn

1. Stop the burning by running cool (not cold) water over the burned area, soaking it in cool water, or using a cool, wet washcloth. Do not cool a burn for longer than 30 minutes.
2. Clean the burned area very gently with soap and water.
3. Partial thickness burns need to be covered for protection. Cover any blisters with a clean bandage. If the blister is broken, spray it with an antibacterial spray, or antibiotic ointment, and cover it with a clean bandage.
4. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) can be taken to ease the pain and reduce swelling.

NEVER do any of the following to treat a minor burn

1. Never use ice on a burn. Ice can freeze the area and cause even more damage.
2. Never use butter, shortening or petroleum jelly (Vaseline) on a burn. Items like these can prevent heat from escaping and allow the burning to continue deep inside the skin.
3. Never break a blister. This can allow germs inside and cause an infection. A blister is a natural bandage.

When NOT to treat minor burns at home

Even if they seem minor, a doctor who specializes in children's burns should treat some burns. These include burns that:

- Are on the face. All burns, like cuts, can cause scars. If treated by a child's burn doctor, minor burns to the face have a much better chance of healing without scarring.
- Burns that cross a joint such as a knuckle. Burns to a joint can reduce the amount of movement, sometimes forever. If treated by a child's burn doctor, minor burns on joints have a much better chance to heal correctly.
- Do not seem to heal in five to seven days. If a burn has not healed in a week, it most likely is not a minor burn and should be treated by a child's burn doctor.

Burns can be very serious injuries, but with the right care at home or by a doctor who specializes in children's burns, they can heal and not leave lasting scars or injuries.