

First aid for burns

While Burn Awareness Week is the first week in February, it's always important to know what to do since you or a loved one can be injured from a burn at any time.

Immediate first aid for burns

- First, stop the burning to prevent a more severe burn.
- Heat burns (thermal burns): Smother any flames by covering them with a blanket or water. If your clothing catches fire, do not run; **stop, drop, and roll** on the ground to smother the flames.
- Cold temperature burns: Try first aid measures to warm the areas. Small areas of your body (ears, face, nose, fingers, toes) that are really cold or frozen can be warmed by blowing warm air on them, tucking them inside your clothing, or putting them in warm water.
- Liquid scald burns (thermal burns): Run cool tap water over the burn for 10 to 20 minutes. Do not use ice.
- Electrical burns: After the person has been separated from the electrical source, check for breathing and a heartbeat. If the person is not breathing or does not have a heartbeat, call 911.
- Chemical burns: Natural foods such as chili peppers, which contain a substance irritating to the skin, can cause a burning sensation. When a chemical burn occurs, find out what chemical caused the burn. Call your local **Poison Control Center** for more information about how to treat the burn.
- Tar or hot plastic burns: Immediately run cold water over the hot tar or hot plastic to cool the tar or plastic.
- Next, look for other injuries. The burn may not be the only injury.
- Remove any jewelry or clothing at the site of the burn. If clothing is stuck to the burn, do not remove it. Carefully cut around the stuck fabric to remove loose fabric. Remove all jewelry because it may be hard to remove it later if swelling occurs.

Prepare for an evaluation by a medical care provider.

- If you are going to see your provider soon:
 - Cover the burn with a clean, dry cloth to reduce the risk of infection.
 - Do not put any salve or medicine on the burned area so your doctor can properly assess your burn.

- Do not put ice or butter on the burned area because these measures do not help and can damage the skin tissue.
- Certainly, anyone can suffer from a burn, however, burn safety is a foreign concept to most young explorers. In fact, one of the most difficult lessons young children might learn is that some things — such as stoves, radiators, and flickering flames — can be painfully hot. If children play with matches or lighters, the threat can extend to the entire family. Take burn safety precautions to prevent injuries and dangerous situations.

Burn safety at home

- Many ordinary things in a home — from bath water to hot food to electrical outlets — can cause childhood burns. To prevent burns, follow these burn safety tips:
- **Reduce water temperature.** Set the thermostat on your water heater to below 120 F (48.9 C). Always test the water temperature before your child gets in the tub. Aim for bath water around 100 F (38 C).
- **Avoid hot spills.** Don't cook, drink, or carry hot beverages or soup while holding a child. Keep hot foods and liquids away from table and counter edges. Don't use tablecloths or placemats, which young children can pull down. When you're using the stove, use back burners and turn the handles of your pots and pans toward the rear of the stove. Avoid leaving food cooking on the stove unattended.
- **Establish “no” zones.** Block access to the stove and fireplace, and make space heaters and water heaters inaccessible.
- **Unplug irons.** Store items designed to get hot, such as clothes irons, unplugged and out of reach.
- **Test food temperature.** Food or liquids warmed in a microwave might heat unevenly.
- **Choose a cool-water humidifier or vaporizer.** If you use a hot-steam vaporizer, keep it out of reach.
- **Address outlets and electrical cords.** Cover unused electrical outlets with safety caps. Inserting a fork, key, or other metal object into an outlet could result in an electrical burn. Keep electrical cords and wires out of the way so children don't chew on them. Replace damaged, brittle, or frayed electrical cords.

Burn safety outdoors

These burn safety measures can protect children from outdoor hazards:

- **Watch grills and fire pits.** Don't allow children to play near these potential hazards.
- **Check car seats.** Before placing your child in a car seat, check for hot straps or buckles. If you park in direct sunlight, cover the car seat with a towel or blanket.
- **Forgo backyard fireworks.** Leave fireworks, including sparklers, to trained professionals.

Fire safety counts, too

Take these simple precautions to prevent fires:

- **Lock up matches and lighters.** Store matches, lighters, and flammable liquids in a locked cabinet or drawer. Teach children that matches and lighters aren't toys.
- **Be careful with candles and cigarettes.** Keep burning candles out of reach, and extinguish candles before leaving the room. If you smoke, avoid smoking in the house — especially in bed. Be sure cigarettes are completely out before throwing them away.
- **Use space heaters with care.** Keep space heaters at least three feet away from bedding, drapes, furniture, and other flammable materials. Keep children away from space heaters. Never leave a space heater on when you go to sleep or place a space heater near someone who's sleeping.
- **Keep your fireplace clean.** An annual cleaning and inspection can help prevent a chimney fire.

In case of emergency, keep up-to-date fire extinguishers handy throughout your home. Teach children to leave a burning building by crawling under the smoke, and to stop, drop, and roll if clothes catch fire. Practice a mock fire drill in your home. And be sure to install and maintain smoke alarms on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas. Check your smoke alarms yearly and replace the batteries every year. Being prepared for an emergency can be the best safety tool of all.