

SAFETY MEMO

December 4th, 2023 – Providing First Aid for Burns



Did you know?

Introduction

During an emergency, there are key steps that must be carried out:

- Check or secure the scene to ensure your safety.
- Call Emergency Medical services (EMS).
- Check the person or conduct a primary survey to determine what is wrong.
- Provide care or first aid procedures.

Here are some basic first aid procedures that can be performed for thermal and chemical burns^{1,2}.

Thermal Burns

Ensure that you have the appropriate PPE to prevent contact with another person's bodily fluids and the thermal source.

The cause of a thermal burn (fire or a hot fluid or surface) may be an imminent danger to both of you and the victim. Remove the cause of the burn or remove the victim from the source of the burn as quickly as possible.

- Remove jewellery and restrictive clothing.
- Check that the victim's airway is open, that the person is conscious, and that there are signs of circulation.
- For first- or second-degree burns:
 - cool the burn area using cool water for at least 10 minutes or until the pain subsides.
 - Cover the burn with a dry, sterile gauze bandage.
 - Encourage additional medical attention for partial thickness burns (e.g., blisters, swelling, pain, etc.), and if the victim experiences increased pain, redness, or fever.
- For third-degree burns:
 - Call emergency services and allow medical responders to treat the burn.
 - Do not apply water or ointments/creams.
 - Do not remove stuck clothing.
 - Cover the burn with a sterile bandage or clean cloth.
 - If the victim is going into shock, lay the person on the ground and elevate their feet by 12in (1ft).

Chemical Burns

Ensure you have the appropriate PPE to prevent contact with the chemical(s).

Brush off dry chemicals from the person's skin and clothing.

Refer to the SDS information for first aid measures before flushing with water.

Call emergency services for major chemical burns which are³:

- Deep, involving all layers of the skin.
- Larger than 3 inches (8cm) in diameter.
- Cover the hands, feet, face, groin, buttocks, or major joint, or encircles an arm or leg.
- Might cause shock with symptoms such as cool, clammy skin, weak pulse, and shallow breathing.

If indicated in the SDS, flush affected areas with water for 15 minutes (30 minutes for chemicals in eye(s)), or until emergency response arrives.

Remove any chemical soaked or contaminated clothing. Bandages or cover the burn with a clean, loose bandage.

Precautions for all Types of Burns

- Do not breathe, cough on, or touch the burned area.
- Do not break blisters.
- Do not remove clothing that is stuck to the burned area.
- Do not use ice to cool the affected area.
- Never apply any lotions, creams, ointments or use butter on a burn.
- Seek medical attention immediately.

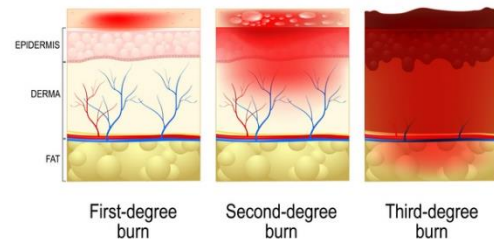


Figure 1: illustration showing skin burns of first-, second-, and third degree. Courtesy of iStock.

¹ St. John Ambulance. (2019). First aid reference guide. Retrieved from https://www.sja.ca/sites/default/files/2021-05/First%20aid%20reference%20guide_V4.1_Public.pdf

² Red Cross. (2017). Comprehensive guide for first aid and CPR. Retrieved from https://www.redcross.ca/crc/documents/comprehensive_guide_for_firstaidcpr_en.pdf

³ Mayo Clinic. (2022). Chemical burns: first aid. Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/first-aid/first-aid-chemical-burns/basics/art-20056667>