

Burns and Scalds

Information for patients and parents/carers

What is a burn?

A burn is a type of injury to the skin or other tissues caused by heat, cold, electricity, chemicals, friction or radiation. Burns are one of the most common household injuries, especially among children.

Wound dressing

Your child may have a dressing applied in A&E. It is important that this is kept clean and dry and ensure that your child avoids playing in sand or water. You should attend A&E if:

- The dressing becomes wet, dirty or loose
- There is an offensive smell from the dressing
- There is leakage through to the outer layer of bandage
- There is increased pain from the wound
- The bandage appears too tight and the fingers/toes become swollen, cold or blue.

Some of these could mean there is a wound infection, if left untreated this could delay healing.

Toxic Shock Syndrome

If a wound becomes infected, it can affect the whole body, causing a serious illness called Toxic Shock Syndrome. This is not a common illness; however it is important that you are able to recognise it. The signs and symptoms are as follows:

- Fever (37.5°C and above)
- Rash – anywhere on the body
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Lethargy.

If your child shows any of these symptoms, you should attend the Accident and Emergency department urgently.

Pain management

Your child may complain of pain for at least 48 hours after the injury occurred. Children's paracetamol and ibuprofen can be given following the dosing instructions on the packaging, if you are unsure, please contact your GP or pharmacist for further advice.

Nutrition

It is important that your child continues to have a balanced diet including protein (e.g. yoghurts, chicken, eggs, milk, and beans) for good wound healing.

Depth of burn

There are 4 levels of burns; your child may have one or a mixture of these. The depths are as follows;

- Superficial – heal within 7 days with no scarring
- Superficial Partial Thickness – heal within 10-14 days with little/no scarring
- Deep Partial Thickness/Deep Dermal – will leave a scar and may require a skin graft to heal
- Full thickness – will require a skin graft and will leave a scar.

Follow up appointments

You may be asked to arrange a practice nurse appointment at your GP or to attend an appointment in the Plastic Dressings Clinic in the outpatients department of the hospital (OPD 12, 1st floor by therapies) for further review. This appointment should be within 48-72 hours following the burn/scald. If you have been asked to return for an appointment, we request that you give your child some paracetamol or ibuprofen at least 1 hour before the appointment to make them more comfortable when the dressing is removed and wound reviewed.

Contact Us

Accident & Emergency: 0131 312 0007/ 0008

Plastic Dressings Clinic: 0131 312 0107