

# BURNS

## INTRODUCTION

Burns are injuries to the skin. There are many different kinds of burns and they are caused by different factors, for example:

- Hot liquids like boiling water or spilling coffee or tea
- Coming into contact with steam when lifting the lid of a pot whilst cooking
- Spending too much time in the sun
- Handling dangerous liquids such as bleach or acid
- Open fires
- Electrical burns when working with exposed parts of electrical appliances, wiring
- Lightning strike.

## TREATMENT

Treating the burn as soon as it happens will help the skin to heal faster. Here are some options:

- Place a cool compress (bag with ice or packet with frozen vegetables) over the area of the burn to relieve the pain and swelling. Do this for 5 to 15 minutes or
- Soak the wound in cool water for five minutes or longer or hold the burn area under a running tap of cold water for 5 minutes.
- Never use oil, butter, cream or egg to treat the burn – it might cause an infection and it will be very painful to clean when a doctor has to clean the wound.
- Avoid the use of cotton balls, because the small fibres can stick to the burned skin and increase the risk of infection. Rather use gauze to protect the affected area.
- If the burn looks yellow or green and is very painful, there might be infection. Go to a doctor for treatment.
- If a blister has formed, do not open the skin to let the fluid out. The body will heal itself and the skin will prevent infection from setting in.

## PREVENTION

Accidents happen, but the following tips may help to prevent some burns:

- Only keep safe chemicals in the house and try to buy environmentally friendly chemicals to clean the house.
- Store chemicals in their original bottles with their labels intact and where children cannot find it.
- When using chemicals, protect your eyes with glasses and your skin with rubber gloves.
- When cooking, try to keep pots on the back burners of the stove with their handles turned toward the centre of the stove to prevent accidental spilling when walking past.
- Cover all exposed electrical sockets in the house with childproof covers.
- Check and discard electrical cords with exposed wires.
- Unplug appliances not in use.
- Place electrical cords out of reach of children.
- Buy a fire extinguisher for the kitchen.
- Young children should always be under supervision in a kitchen or when there is an open fire nearby.
- Children love to play with matches, so always make sure matches and lighters are locked away and out of their reach.
- Stay out of the sun during the hottest time of the day and wear protective clothing if you have to be in the sun. Use a high SPF sunblock every day and limit the time spent in the sun.

## CONCLUSION

We cannot always prevent burns, but by being more careful, we might be able to reduce the chances of burns occurring. Knowing what to do when somebody has burnt will help the body to heal itself in a shorter time and reduce the severity of scar formation.



# DISCLAIMER

## TAKE NOTE

The information provided in this article is for education purposes only and does not serve as a medical diagnosis. Members should always consult their healthcare provider with serious symptoms.

Please note that Heritage Health plans do not necessarily cover the costs of the condition/s described.

