

## **Burn injuries are painful and preventable**

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Nearly 500,000 Americans seek medical care for accidental burns each year, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Burn injuries are particularly bad for young children and elders because they have thinner skin than adults.

Burn injuries often are divided into three types based on their severity:

- 1st-degree: The top layer of skin (epidermis) turns red as with a sunburn. This is a minor injury.
- 2nd-degree: This burn injures the top and lower layers (dermis) of skin. This patient may experience pain, redness, swelling, and blistering.
- 3rd-degree: This burn is severe because it impacts the epidermis, dermis, and underlying fat tissue. Because third-degree burns damage nerve endings, the patient may not feel pain in the area of the burn itself, but they may feel excruciating pain adjacent to the burn.

Most burn injuries can be treated at home or outside a hospital setting. For 1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-degree burns, run cool water over the injured area for 3-5 minutes to pull any remaining heat from the tissue. However, do not use ice because you don't want to freeze the fragile tissue.

Remove jewelry at the burn injury because its metal may be hot and to prevent jewelry from acting like a tourniquet if the injury causes swelling.

Do not apply ointment to the injury until after cool water has removed all the heat. Otherwise, the ointment will trap heat in the tissue and allow it to cause more damage.

For 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree burns, rinse the injury with cool water, gently pat it dry, cover it with a clean, dry cloth, and wait for paramedics because this injury is severe. Definitely call 911 for a 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree burn injury.

Also call 911 if the burn is on the patient's face, hands, feet, or genitals, or if the burn wraps around a limb or finger.

Fortunately, most burn injuries can be prevented.

- Create a kid-free zone in kitchens and around grills outside. Younger children should stay at least 3 feet away from cooking spaces.
- Cook on the back burners of the stove and turn pot handles away from the edge, away from outstretched fingers.
- Keep hot foods and drinks away from the edge of counters and tables.
- Carry either your hot drink or your child; carrying both is a recipe for disaster.
- Stand by your pan while cooking on the stovetop or on the grill. If you have to step away, bring a large wooden spoon so you won't forget to return to the kitchen.
- Use potholders or oven mitts to carry hot pots, pans, and trays.
- Before placing a child in the bath, check the water temperature with the inside of your wrist. The water should feel warm to the touch, but not hot.
- Be careful around fireplaces. When a gas fireplace is turned on, the glass is extremely hot and may need more than an hour to cool.
- That first whiff of air from the microwavable popcorn smells great, but the steam is hot enough to burn your throat. Be careful opening the bag.

If you have questions about burns or other aspects of your family's safety, please visit [www.southmetro.org](http://www.southmetro.org) or find our agency on social media.