

Advice following a non-complex burn or scald injury

You/your child have sustained a burn or scald injury where the skin has been damaged. The amount of damage will determine the length of time your wound will take to heal. We would expect your burn to heal within 14 days. If your burn or scald has not healed within this time you may require further intervention.

Dressings

- If you have a dressing on your burn or scald(s) please keep this clean, dry and not remove it until your next dressing change.
- You will have an appointment made to have your dressings changed and your burn checked.
- If your dressing gets wet or falls off, then this needs replacing. Please contact your local Burn Service who will advise you of the appropriate action.
- Swelling is normal with a burn or scald wound. To help relieve swelling elevate the affected area on pillows or sleep/sit upright (for facial burns) when resting.

Signs of Infection

Burn and scald wounds often leak and produce wound fluid, this is normal, however, if you or your wound develops any of the following then please seek advice, sooner than your clinic appointment;

- Excessive wound leakage (the bandages or dressings are saturated with fluid)
- Increasing pain
- High temperature

- Cold hands or feet with a hot body
- Unpleasant odour
- Not wanting to eat or drink / diarrhoea and vomiting
- Unusually sleepy
- Redness, swelling in the affected area or a rash
- Flu-like symptoms.

If any of the symptoms are present in a child then please seek urgent medical advice.

Pain and Itching

To manage your pain levels at home you may be given a variety of medicines to be used regularly. These medicines should be taken as prescribed and should keep your pain at a comfortable level.

If the pain becomes unmanageable at home please contact your burn service for further advice and a reassessment of your pain medication.

Common pain medicine you may be given can include:

- Paracetamol
- Ibuprofen or Diclofenac
- Codeine

You may be given a combination of any of the above to manage your pain.

Please take a dose of your pain medication approximately 30 minutes before your dressings/therapy appointment (providing enough time has passed since the last dose.)

Your Nurse will advise you if you need to eat or refrain from eating prior to your appointment for a dressing change. This may be necessary for you to have certain types of medication during your dressing change.

PLEASE CHECK THE PARACETAMOL CONTENT OF ALL MEDICATIONS AND BEWARE OF OVERDOSING

Itching is a common problem when your wound is healing, the use of antihistamines, which can be purchased in the local chemist can help alleviate this. If this is experienced please ask your Burn Service for the 'Managing Itchy Skin after a Burn Injury' leaflet.

Exercise

After skin has been injured by a burn or scald it can become less flexible and needs to be cared for and exercised to make sure normal movements are not affected.

Exercises should be carried out little and often throughout the day to prevent stiffness. This can be achieved by using your limbs normally in a functional way e.g. getting washed and dressed and doing daily activities such as housework.

For children, activities such as playing, feeding themselves or bathing will distract them from realising they are exercising.

If movement is painful make sure you have taken enough pain relief. Or try to time activities to 30 minutes after taking pain relief.

When Your Wound Has Healed

Washing, Moisturising and Massage

You may notice that your new skin is very dry. This is because your skin is not yet producing its own natural oils. It can take as long as two years before it is fully capable of doing this again. Also initially your burn or scald will appear very red but will fade over time.

To help the scar mature, it is recommended that you massage and moisturise the affected area(s). The area(s) should be washed with non-perfumed and non-coloured soap and then patted dry thoroughly. The area then needs to be massaged 2-3 times a day as directed by the Burn Service staff.

It is very important that the old moisturiser is washed off before applying more as a build up of moisturiser and oil can cause blackheads and pimples.

If you are concerned about scarring or it begins to restrict movement then please seek advice from your GP or Burn Service Team.

Blackheads/Acne Type Rash

These are a very common problem, caused by soap or dirt collecting in the uneven surface of the graft or healed area. Do not pop or squeeze the blackheads.

Ongoing Skin Care

All healed burns and scars will need extra protection from the sun for up to 2 years. This is because exposure to the sun can very easily damage newly healed skin, causing blistering, burning and risk of permanent colour change.

In order to prevent this you should:

- Wear UV clothing that protects the scar
- Use sun cream (SPF 50+) or total sun block
- Stay in the shade when outdoors Avoid sunbeds

Your new skin may also be more sensitive to cold initially, and it is important to keep this area warm in cold weather.

In addition too much heat can also cause itchiness and irritation to healed areas.

Problems You May Experience Once Your Wound Has Healed

Skin Breakdown

Small areas of scar breakdown/blisters can occur from friction, pressure or infections. Poor moisturising technique or poor skin hygiene can leave raw areas that need dressing. This problem occurs in burn injuries, but if taken care of will heal in time. Your Nurse or Therapist will advise you regarding the type of dressing to use. Small blisters may also occur. If you notice blisters then please contact your Burn Service for advice.

For further information telephone:

Regional Paediatric Burns Unit **01924 541931**

Regional Adult Burns Unit **01924 541702**

Produced in conjunction with Northern Burn Care Network

We are committed to providing high quality care. If you have a suggestion, comment, complaint or appreciation about the care you have received, or if you need this leaflet in another format please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on: **01924 542972** or email: **myh-tr.palsmidyorks@nhs.net**

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