

Emergency Services

Burn Care

A burn is damage to your body's skin and can also involve the layers under the skin. Burns can be caused by sunlight, heat, chemicals, electricity, or radiation.

How long will it take for the burn to heal?

Mild burns take about 3 to 6 days to heal. A layer of skin might peel off in the first day or two. This is normal.

More serious burns can take up to 3 weeks to heal.

How to care for your bandage

If we do bandage your burn, you will have one of two types of bandages.

- You have a **regular bandage**.
- You have a special **Acticoat™ bandage**.

Regular bandages

Change the bandage every day or when it gets wet.

To change the bandage:

1. Wash your hands for at least 45 seconds with soap and water.
2. Dry your hands with a clean towel.
3. Remove the outer layer of the bandage.
4. Remove the inner layer of the bandage. If it is stuck to the burn, **do not** pull off the bandage. Soak the bandage in warm clean water for a few minutes then slowly peel off the bandage.

5. Wash the burn gently with warm water.
6. Pat the area dry with a soft clean towel.
7. Put a thin layer of medicated ointment or cream on a clean bandage. _____
8. Cover the burn with this inner bandage.
9. Place a clean outer bandage on top. Make sure the bandage covers the whole burn.
10. Tape the outer bandage in place. **Do not** put tape directly on to the burn.

Do not break any blisters. If you do, it could get infected. If a blister accidentally breaks, keep it clean. Put a thin layer of medicated ointment or cream on the open blister before putting on a clean bandage.

Acticoat™ bandages

This special bandage is used for more serious burns. Serious burns have a greater chance of getting infected. This bandage contains silver which helps prevent and treat infection. Your skin will turn dark colour around the burn. This is from the silver and it fades with time.

****If you have a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) test, you **must tell** the technologist you have a bandage containing silver.**

Do not change this bandage on your own.

You must have your bandage changed and your burn checked on: _____ (date)
at _____ (location).

Burn Care - *continued*

How to take care of yourself at home

Keep the bandage clean and dry.

When showering, protect the bandage with plastic wrap and waterproof tape. Make sure the wrap and tape is 1 to 2 inches beyond the edge of the bandage.

If your burn is on your arm or leg:

For the next 24 hours, rest your arm or leg up on a pillow while sitting or lying down. This helps keep the swelling down.

Take medicine for the pain if you need it. Check with your family doctor or pharmacist as to what will work best for you.

As the burn heals, it will become itchy and dry. **Do not** scratch.

You can leave the bandage off once the wound is no longer open or draining.

Once the bandage is off and your skin has healed, you can use a small amount of an unscented lotion to keep the skin soft and moist.

When to get help

Contact your family doctor if your burn shows any of these signs of infection:

- Your pain gets worse or is not getting better.
- The redness around the burn gets worse or is not going away over time.
- There is a bad smell coming from the burn.
- You have green or brown fluid (pus) coming from the burn (or from blisters).
- You have chills and a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F).

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- You have any of the signs of infection listed above and cannot contact your family doctor.
- You notice swelling, numbness, or tingling below the burn area (for burns on an arm or leg).

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- HealthLinkBC 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or online at www.HealthLinkBC.ca