



Burns first aid saves lives and prevents further injury

1. Check for Danger & Call for Help

Watch out for hazards such as electrical wires and fire. If it is safe to do so; stop, disconnect or remove these hazards before you help the patient to avoid injury to rescuers, bystanders or the patient. If the scene is unsafe, call 000 or the relevant authorities for help.

2. Stop the burning

Stop, Drop, Roll. Remove the burning source or move the patient.

The source of heat or burning should be stopped and the patient should be removed from the burning source. This includes removing burned clothing, unless it is stuck to the patient. Jewellery on burned limbs should also be removed as it may constrict when swelling occurs over the next few hours.

3. ABCs

Remember to monitor Airway, Breathing and Circulation as part of basic life support. Call 000 if the patient is unwell.

4. Cool the burn for 20 minutes

Never use ice, oils or creams

Cooling methods should be applied for at least 20 minutes and be administered as soon as possible.

Cooling the wound is very important, it can significantly reduce the size of injury as well as reduce pain and swelling. Cooling the burn has an effect up to 3 hours post injury.

Clean, cool running water between 5–25°C is the best choice. Wet towels, refreshed with cool water every 2–3 minutes or burn specific gel sheets are useful alternatives.

Lakes, oceans, rivers and swimming pools can also help cool the burn, but there is an infection risk in still water. As such, these cooling methods should only be used when other first aid options are unavailable.

Ice or icy water can cause further injury. Never use water below 4°C as it causes reduced skin blood-flow which can increase skin damage.

Chemical Burns are serious

Chemical Burns require additional irrigation and urgent medical attention for treatment specific to the chemical injury. If you are unsure of the chemical involved, bring the chemical bottle or label to the hospital.

5. Cover the wound

Wet clothes or towels are good dressings

Dressings help reduce pain and infection. Wet, clean, cotton dressings are a good choice. Gel-based burns specific dressings are an alternative.

6. Avoid Hypothermia

Cool the wound, but warm the patient

Hypothermia is a risk of over-vigorous patient cooling, especially in children and the elderly. Attempt to keep unburned areas of the skin dry and warm, remove wet clothing and wrap the patient in a blanket.

7. Seek medical aid urgently

Present to your doctor, local emergency department or call an ambulance. You can also get advice from HealthDirect on 1800 022 222.

Burn Injuries

Burns are serious, complex injuries requiring specialised care. The Western Australian Burns Service, based at Royal Perth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital treat over 600 serious burns a year. These injuries can take weeks to heal. Deep injuries can have life-long cosmetic and functional deficiencies which affect a person's everyday life. Further research is on-going to advance new techniques to repair serious burns without scarring.



Case Study

A 15 month old girl from regional WA presented to Princess Margaret Hospital with a burn on her chest, after pulling a hot cup of coffee from a table.

Her mother saw the accident and despite her initial panic, remembered to administer first aid. She knew that cooling the burn was important and ran cool water over her daughter's chest for 20 minutes. She then placed clean wet towels over the injured area whilst a neighbour drove them to the nearest hospital, which was over an hour away. When the doctor examined the injuries, it was clear that they were serious, however the mothers quick thinking and prompt first aid had prevented further damage to her daughter's skin and in this case, avoided the need for an operation.

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In the pursuit of scarless healing

The McComb Research Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1999 by Clinical Professor Fiona Wood FRACS AM, Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon and Ms Marie Stoner, Medical Scientist. It was named in honour of Mr Harold McComb FRACS, an internationally-respected surgeon in the field of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and pioneer of burn surgery in Western Australia.

The Foundation is dedicated to a service of excellence to survivors of burn injury, trauma and others who will benefit from tissue engineering using skin culture techniques.

Our goal is to conduct further research into tissue engineering to set international standards in tissue repair, reconstruction and regeneration, with the aim of improving patient quality of life and return to pre-injury condition.

Through exciting new collaborations, the Foundation is linked to research in nano-technology, bioinformatics, data linkage and neurophysiology.

The McComb Research Foundation relies on donations and grants to continue research. If you would like to help us move closer to our goal, please consider donating to the McComb Research Foundation.

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Burns

First

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*Dedicated to research and education into burns,
trauma and scarless healing*