

# BURN WOUNDS & FROSTBITE

## Wound Care Guide

### What is it?

Burns and frostbite aren't just painful, they're dangerous. Whether it's fire, boiling water, hot metal, or freezing cold air, these injuries can rip through your skin and leave you wide open to infection, scarring, and permanent damage.

### What causes thermal burns?

- **Flame injuries:** direct contact with fire
- **Scalds:** hot liquids like oil, glue, or water
- **Contact burns:** prolonged touch with hot surfaces (space heaters, stovetops)
- **Cold burns (frostbite):** exposure to freezing air, water, or metal

The deeper the burn, the higher the risk of infection. And once it sets in, things can go downhill fast.

### Burn Degrees



**First degree**

- Red, hot skin
- Swelling, pain
- Dry, peeling skin



**Second degree**

- Blisters, redness
- May feel no pain
- Damage below surface



**Third degree**

- Waxy, white or charred skin
- Leathery, raised texture
- No blisters, no feeling

Second and third degree burn images, and frostnip image used with permission of Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, all rights reserved.

### Frostbite stages



**Stage 1  
Frostnip**



**Stage 2  
Superficial**



**Stage 3  
Deep**

### How to treat burns

**Heat Burns:** Cool it down by running the burn under cool (not cold) water or use a clean, cool cloth for 5–15 minutes. No ice. No soaking. No scrubbing.

**Frostbite:** Warm it slowly. Use warm (not hot) water for 30 minutes until skin colour returns.

**Clean the wound:** Use plain soap and water. Don't pop blisters; let them break naturally to avoid infection.

### Protect the area

- First-degree burns usually don't need dressings.
- For deeper burns: Use antibiotic ointment (Polysporin or doctor-prescribed).
- Cover with non-stick gauze or clean cloth, then wrap gently.
- Never use home remedies like butter, toothpaste, oils, or egg whites.

**Manage the pain.** Use Tylenol or Advil to help with pain and swelling.

### When to Get Medical Help

#### Seek help immediately if:

- you have fever, chills, pus, or worsening pain
- it is on your face, hands, genitals or feet
- it's near a joint (knee, shoulder, hip)
- it wraps fully around a limb or body part
- it's larger than an orange or deep (second/third degree)

### Talk to a nurse

**Call:** 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006 Mon-Fri, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Email:** clientcommunitysupport@wdgpublichealth.ca

**wdgpublichealth.ca**