

TYPES OF BURNS

Burns are divided into three categories:



1st Degree (superficial) Burns involve the outer most layer of skin and are usually associated with a sunburn. The skin may appear to be red, very warm or hot to the touch, and may also include small blisters and swelling around the area.

2nd Degree (partial thickness) Burns occur when the second layer of skin is burned. Characteristics include very red, blister formation, extremely painful, and a fair amount of swelling. If the area burned is more than 2-3 inches, or involved functional parts of the body such as feet, face, eyes, ears, or groin, in-depth medical attention is most likely needed. Failure to do so may result in permanent disfigurement or loss of function.

3rd Degree (full thickness) Burns are not minor burns and should be evaluated and treated by a healthcare provider. These are serious burns, no matter what the size or area of the body that may be involved. The skin may appear to be charred, blackened, or white. The skin texture may be very dry or leathery. This type of burn can cause permanent tissue damage.

FIRST AID FOR MINOR SCALDS

When a scald burn injury occurs, it causes a break in the skin and may subsequently cause an infection if it is not appropriately treated right away.

- Cool the burn with running cool (not cold) water for at least 5 minutes.
- Remove all clothing and jewelry around the burned area.
- Cover the burn with a sterile gauze bandage or clean cloth. Wrap the burned area loosely to avoid pressure on the skin.
- Seek medical attention if there is a persistent fever not relieved by medication or redness that extends beyond the border of the burn.
- When in doubt or if a life may be in danger, call 9-1-1.



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The Illinois Fire Safety Alliance (IFSA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to fire safety, burn prevention, and supporting burn survivors.



ILLINOIS FIRE SAFETY ALLIANCE

WHAT IS A SCALD BURN?

A scald burn is caused by a hot liquid or a hot, moist vapor (steam), resulting in the damage of one or more layers of the skin.



Most scald burn injuries happen in the home, in connection with the preparation or serving of hot food or beverages or from exposure to hot tap water in bathtubs and showers. Severe scalds also occur in the workplace, typically when pipes or valves fail while carrying or regulating the flow of steam.

The severity of a scald injury depends on the temperature to which the skin is exposed and how long it is exposed.

In 2013, the American Burn Association estimated that more than 68,500 scald burn injuries were seen in hospital emergency rooms in the U.S.; 15,500 (23%) of these occurred to children 4 years old and younger.

SCALD PREVENTION TIPS

Scald injuries in the home can be easily prevented by following these basic tips:

- Set water heater temperature to no higher than 120 degrees Fahrenheit, or just below the medium setting.
- Always be present when a child is in or around the bathtub; if you must leave, take the child(ren) with you.
- Create a “No Kid Zone” in the kitchen around the stove, oven, and hot items.
- Place pots and pans on the back burner with handles turned away from the edge of the stove.
- Make sure appliance cords (slow cookers, deep fryers, etc.) never dangle over the counter edge.
- Keep hot drinks away from the edge of tables and counters.
- Use a travel mug with a tight-fitting lid for all hot drinks.



WHO'S AT RISK?

Although scald burns can happen to anyone, young children, older adults, and people with disabilities are the most likely to incur such injuries.

Young children have thinner skin resulting in deeper burns than adults for the same temperature and exposure time to a scalding substance. Small children also have little control of their environment, less perception of danger, and less ability to escape a burning situation on their own. Children can grow fast and can reach new, dangerous things every day. They do not realize that hot liquids burn like fire.

Older adults also have thinner skin so hot liquids cause deeper burns with even brief exposure. The ability to feel heat may be decreased due to certain medical conditions so they may not realize water is too hot until the injury has occurred. Older adults may also have conditions that make them more prone to falls in the bathtub or shower or while carrying hot liquids.

Persons with disabilities are at high risk for all types of burn injuries including scalds. Mobility impairments, slow or awkward movements, muscle weakness, or slower reflexes increase the risk of spills while moving hot liquids. Burns to the lap are common when a person attempts to carry hot liquids while seated in a wheelchair. Sensory impairments can result in decreased sensation, especially to the hands and feet, so the person may not realize something is too hot. Also, changes to a person's intellect or judgement may hinder the person's ability to recognize a dangerous situation or respond appropriately to remove themselves from danger.