Burns are the most common household injury and require immediate care, regardless of severity. Before treating a burn-related injury, it is important to first determine the type and degree of the burn.

**Types of Burns**

- **Thermal burns**: Flames, hot liquids and other high-heat sources.
- **Solar burns**: Overexposure to the sun.
- **Chemical burns**: Laboratory or household chemicals.
- **Electrical burns**: Power lines, lightning and electrical outlets.

**How to treat burns**

- **Chemical burns**: Remove contaminated clothing or jewelry and rinse immediately. Call 911 if the person shows signs of shock, such as fainting or shallow breathing.

- **Electrical burns**: Cover the burn with a dry, sterile gauze bandage — do not attempt to cool the burn with ice. Call 911 if the source is a high-voltage wire or lightning, or if the person experiences loss of consciousness, seizure or difficulty breathing.

- **Thermal burns**: Apply a cold compress or cooling gel such as aloe, menthol or camphor. Call 911 if the person has a fever of 102° F or higher.

- **Solar burns**: Instant cold compress pack. Call 911 if the person inhaled smoke or if the burn area is larger than 3 inches.

**Burn grades**

- **FIRST-DEGREE BURN**: Epidermis, top layer of the skin.
- **SECOND-DEGREE BURN**: Superficial dermis, deeper layer of the skin.
- **THIRD-DEGREE BURN**: Deep dermis, extends to every layer of the skin.
- **FOURTH-DEGREE BURN**: Subcutaneous, reaches all skin layers, fat and underlying tendons.
FIRST-DEGREE BURN
Symptoms: Redness and peeling; skin feels painful and hot to the touch.
Treatment: Apply cool compress or immerse in water until pain subsides.
Recovery: Heals without scarring within one week.

SECOND-DEGREE BURN
Symptoms: Swelling and blisters.
Treatment: Cover with sterile gauze to protect from infection.
Recovery: Heals with mild scarring within several weeks.

THIRD-DEGREE BURN
Symptoms: Loss of skin layers; destroys hair follicles and sweat glands.
Treatment: Surgery with possible grafting.
Recovery: Heals with significant scarring within months.

FOURTH-DEGREE BURN
Symptoms: Loss of all skin layers extending to the bone and muscle tissue.
Treatment: Surgery with skin grafting.
Recovery: Significant scarring; may result in disability or death.

Did you know?
- More than 1 million people each year seek medical treatment for burn-related injuries.
- 50,000 people are hospitalized due to burn-related injuries.
- 4,500 people die from burn-related injuries.

From the expert
"Less severe burns can be treated with local wound care and often heal well on their own. Severe burns that involve larger areas of the body and deeper layers of skin may require medical care. Be sure to monitor severe burn scars, as there is an increased risk of skin cancer."
— Dr. Young Lee, dermatologist at Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Group

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