Electrical Shock: Care Instructions

Overview

You have had an electrical shock. This may have happened when you used an electrical appliance or power cord. Lightning and stun guns also can cause electrical shocks.

The shock can cause a burn where the current enters and leaves your body. The electricity may have injured blood vessels, nerves, and muscles. The electricity also could have affected your heart and lungs.

You might not see all the damage the shock caused for up to 10 days after the shock. Your doctor will tell you what to look for depending on the type of shock you got.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

If you have a mild burn:

- Clean the area each day with mild soap and water.
- Bandage the wound.
    - If the doctor told you to use an ointment under the bandage, use it exactly as directed.
    - Cover the burn with a nonstick gauze pad.
    - Tape the pad to your skin, well away from the burn, or follow other dressing instructions, as your doctor advises.
    - Do not wrap tape all the way around a hand, arm, or leg. This can cause swelling.
    - Keep the bandage clean and dry. Change the bandage 2 times a day and anytime it gets wet.
- Do not break blisters open. This increases the chance of infection. If a blister breaks open by itself, blot up the liquid, and leave the skin that covered the blister. This helps protect the new skin.

For pain and itching:

- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Read and follow all instructions on the label. Do not use aspirin, because it can make bleeding in the burned area worse.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
- If the burn itches, do not scratch it. Try an over-the-counter antihistamine. Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.

Preventing electrical shocks at home

- Place plug covers on all outlets.
- Use extra caution when using electrical items in areas where water sources are nearby, such as using a hair dryer in the bathroom.

- Do not overload electrical outlets by using too many extension cords or electrical receptacle multipliers.
- Replace electrical equipment and appliances that show signs of wear, such as having frayed or loose wires.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have symptoms of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
  - Red streaks leading from the area.
  - Pus draining from the area.
  - A fever.
- You have a hard time breathing.
- You have new or worse pain in the burn area.
- Your urine looks pink or brown.
- Your muscles ache or feel weak.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

Where can you learn more?

Go to https://www.healthwise.net/patiented

Enter **Q275** in the search box to learn more about **"Electrical Shock: Care Instructions".**

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