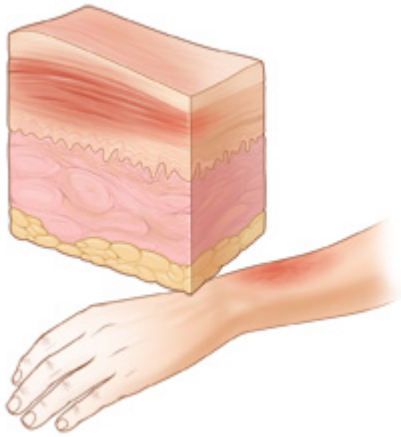


# Burns: Care Instructions



## Overview

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Burns—even minor ones—can be very painful. A minor burn may heal within several days, while a more serious burn may take weeks or even months to heal completely.

You may notice that the burned area feels tight and hard while it is healing. It is important to continue to move the area as the burn heals to prevent loss of motion or loss of function in the area.

When your skin is damaged by a burn, you have a greater risk of infection. Keep the wound clean and change the bandages regularly to prevent infection and help the burn heal.

Burns can leave permanent scars. Taking good care of the burn as it heals may help prevent bad scars.

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, **get medical treatment right away**.

**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?

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- If your doctor told you how to care for your burn, follow your doctor's instructions. If you did not get instructions, follow this general advice:
  - Wash the burn every day with a mild soap and water. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol, which can slow healing.
  - Gently pat the burn dry after you wash it.
  - Apply a thin layer of antibiotic ointment or petroleum jelly on the burn.
  - You may cover the burn with a nonstick bandage. There are many bandage products available. Be sure to read the product label for correct use.

- Replace the bandage as needed.
- Protect your burn while it is healing. Cover your burn if you are going out in the cold or the sun.
  - Wear long sleeves if the burn is on your hands or arms.
  - Wear a hat if the burn is on your face.
  - Wear socks and shoes if the burn is on your feet.
- 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.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.

### For pain and itching

- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- If the burn itches, try not to scratch it. Try an over-the-counter antihistamine. Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your pain gets worse.
- You have symptoms of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness near the burn.
  - Red streaks leading from the burn.
  - Pus draining from the burn.
  - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

### Where can you learn more?

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

Enter **E043** in the search box to learn more about "**Burns: Care Instructions**".

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