



Burns: First aid

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By Mayo Clinic Staff

For minor burns:

- **Cool the burn to help soothe the pain.** Hold the burned area under cool (not cold) running water for 10 to 15 minutes or until the pain eases. Or apply a clean towel dampened with cool tap water.
- **Remove rings or other tight items from the burned area.** Try to do this quickly and gently, before the area swells.
- **Don't break small blisters (no bigger than your little fingernail).** If blisters break, gently clean the area with mild soap and water, apply an antibiotic ointment, and cover it with a nonstick gauze bandage.
- **Consider a tetanus shot.** Make sure that your tetanus booster is up to date. Doctors recommend people get a tetanus shot at least every 10 years.

See your doctor if you develop large blisters. Also seek medical help if the burn covers a large area of the body or if you notice signs of infection, such as oozing from the wound and increased pain, redness and swelling.

Call 911 or emergency medical help for major burns. Until an emergency unit arrives, take these actions:

- **Protect the burned person from further harm.** If you can do so safely, make sure the person you're helping is not in contact with smoldering materials or exposed to smoke or heat. But don't remove burned clothing stuck to the skin.
- **Check for signs of circulation.** Look for breathing, coughing or movement. If someone needs CPR call for help immediately.
- **Remove jewelry, belts and other restrictive items,** especially from around burned areas and the neck. Burned areas swell rapidly.
- **Don't immerse large severe burns in cold water.** Doing so could cause a serious loss of body heat (hypothermia) or a drop in blood pressure and decreased blood flow (shock).
- **Elevate the burned area.** Raise the wound above heart level, if possible.
- **Cover the area of the burn.** Use a cool, moist, bandage or a clean cloth.



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