

# Burns

Burns are tissue damage caused by exposure to an external source of heat, electricity, chemical products or radiation.

## Types of burns

According to the **depth** of the damage there are three degrees of burns:

**First-degree burn:** this minor burn affects only the outer layer of skin; it may cause redness and pain. It is the most frequent type of burn.

**Second-degree burn:** this type of burn affects deeper layers of skin. It may cause painful blisters as well as reddening.

**Third-degree burn:** this burn affects all the layers of skin. Carbonised skin tissue can be seen. It is not painful because the nerve endings responsible for pain have been destroyed.

**The deeper or more widespread a burn is the more serious it is.**

Other factors are also involved: age, cause and site of the burn (the most serious burns being on the face, hands, feet, skin folds and genitals).

## What to do in case of a burn?

### Initial first aid:

1. Remove any objects near the burnt area (clothing, jewellery...)
2. Wash the area well with water, for at least 20-30 minutes to calm the pain. If this is not possible, apply cold



compresses. If the burn is dirty wash it with soap and water.

3. Cover the burn with a clean bandage. Don't use creams or ointments without a healthcare professional's advice.
4. If the pain persists after following these steps, a painkiller, like paracetamol or ibuprofen, can be taken. In case of doubt, consult your healthcare professional.
5. If the burns are more widespread or there are blisters, before treating them you should get a doctor to look at them. Depending on how serious the burn is, medical attention at the hospital may be required.



### Further care

Once the burns have been assessed by a healthcare professional you should treat them by following their advice (second-degree burns).

If medical attention is not required (first-degree burns), you should apply hygienic measures and avoid using household remedies, like toothpaste or creams that you have around the house.

### Will the burn leave a scar?

**The deeper a burn is, the more likely it is to leave a scar. To try to avoid scarring, try to protect the burn from the sun, cover it with clothing or use a sunscreen.**