

Burns Information Sheet

Burns can be minor medical problems or life-threatening emergencies. Scalding liquids are the most common cause of burns among young children. Flame burns, caused by direct contact with fire, are more prevalent among older children.

Because young children have thinner skin than older children and adults, their skin burns at lower temperatures and more deeply. A child exposed to hot tap water at 140 degrees Fahrenheit for three seconds will sustain a third-degree burn, an injury requiring hospitalization and skin grafts.

Symptoms

First-degree burns affect only the outer layer of the skin (epidermis). The burned area may cause pain and appears

- Red and dry
- Swollen

Second-degree burns affect the top and second layer of skin (dermis). Second-degree burns can cause severe pain and may appear

- Red and wet.
- Swollen.
- Blistered.

Third-degree burns reach into the fat layer beneath the dermis. The skin may appear

- Stiff.
- Waxy white.
- Leathery or tan.

Fourth-degree burns affect structures beneath the skin, such as muscle and bones. The skin may appear blackened or charred. If nerve damage is substantial, the student may feel no pain at all.

Treatment

Good nutrition is important during recovery. Studies show that vitamins and minerals promote wound healing and prevent the spread of infection. (Burns, University of Maryland Medical Center)

In severe burns, skin grafting may be necessary. Surgeons remove dead tissue and sew a piece of skin over the burn. The skin can be from another part of the person's body, from a donor or from artificial skin.

Educational Implications

Some students with burns may feel anxious and may need psychological and social support.

Severe burns and treatments are painful and may be traumatic for some children.

Some students with severe scarring may be afraid people will make fun of them.

Some activities may trigger trauma feelings. If so, stop the activity and redirect the student's attention to a calming activity.

Deep burns can limit movement of the bones and joints.

Educational Options

Those students whose burns adversely affect their educational performance may benefit from special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To qualify under IDEA, a student must meet eligibility criteria in one of thirteen specific disability categories. Under IDEA, a student with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and an individualized education program, including individual goals, objectives, related services, accommodations and modifications.

Students that do not qualify for services under IDEA may qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To qualify under Section 504, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (for example learning, breathing, thinking, concentrating, walking, bodily functions). Under Section 504, a student is entitled to equal opportunity, and may qualify for a Section 504 plan that provides regular or special education and related aids and services.

A student with a health condition who does not require special instruction and related services can receive, as appropriate, a wide range of supports in the general education classroom, including accommodations, individualized health plans (IHP), emergency care plans (ECP) and local education agency supports.