

What is it?

A burn occurs when skin is injured by heat. Common causes of burns include hot or boiling liquids and solids, and flames. Burns can also be caused by the sun, radiation, friction, electricity and chemicals.

There are three main types of burns:

- **Superficial burns (first-degree burns):** Damage to only the top layer of skin. The skin is red and painful but doesn't have a blister.
- **Partial thickness burns (second-degree burns):** Damage to the top and second layers of skin. The skin is red, peeling and blistered. It may be white or pale yellow. There also may be clear or yellow coloured fluid leaking from the skin.
- **Full thickness burns (third-degree burns):** Damage to the top two layers of skin and the tissue underneath. The skin can be brown, white, black or charred and feel dry and leathery. This type of burn can destroy nerves so it may not be painful.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- ☐ *How will I know if my burn gets infected?*
- ☐ *What activities should I avoid?*
- ☐ *Will my burn leave a scar?*



What will my GP do now?

Your GP will assess how serious your burn is. Your treatment will depend on the degree, location and cause of your burn. Your GP may refer you to the emergency department or to a special burns unit.

If your burn is not severe, your GP can manage it by using one or more of the following treatments:

- Medication to help the pain and swelling
- Draining large blisters
- Washing and wrapping the burn
- Giving you a tetanus booster shot

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may want to see you again in a few days. Burns can become deeper or get infected. Your GP will want to see how it heals. If your burn does not improve after a week, they may refer you to a specialist burns unit at the hospital.

What can I do?

You should keep your dressings on, clean and dry until you see your GP again. If your burn gets more painful, or if it starts to blister or peel see your GP sooner. You can also take pain and swelling relief medication as directed by your GP. Eating a healthy diet, drinking water and not smoking helps with wound healing.

What supports are available?

There aren't special burn units for people with severe or complex burns in South Western Sydney. The main unit that serves this area is at Concord Repatriation General Hospital. Children and pregnant women may be referred to the burn units at the Royal North Shore Hospital or The Children's Hospital at Westmead Clubbe Ward.

Where can I learn more?

- **Patient.info** – Burns and scalds: [patient.info](https://www.patient.info)
- **Better Health Channel** – Burns and scalds: betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- **The Sydney Childrens Hospitals Network** - Burns injuries: schn.health.nsw.gov.au