
Burns and scalds

Knowing what to do

A burn is damage to the skin caused by direct contact with something hot. Burns can also be caused by certain chemicals, electricity and friction. A scald is a burn that is caused by a hot liquid or steam. Scalds are treated in the same way as burns.

Treat any burn or scald straight after the accident but always take your child to hospital for anything more than a very minor burn or scald. A child's skin is very delicate and can be scarred without the right treatment.

Cool the burnt area by placing under cool running water for at least 20 minutes (making sure the child does not get too cold). When the burn has cooled, cover it with a sterile dressing, food quality cling film or a plastic bag. Don't wrap it too tightly. Don't apply fatty substances like butter or ointment as this won't do any good and will only waste time for hospital staff who'll have to clean the area before it can be treated. Give paracetamol or ibuprofen (see 'know the basics' for advice on usage). Take your child to hospital.

Babies/toddlers pull up on everything when learning to stand and walk. Keep hot drinks out of reach and not on tablecloths that they may pull onto themselves. Look at home safety equipment like a stairgate to keep them safe.

Preventing scalds and burns

- Always supervise children in the kitchen.
- The front of the oven can become hot enough to burn a young child. Use the back rings of cookers when possible.
- Never drink hot drinks with a baby or child on your lap.
- Never let a child drink a hot drink through a straw.
- Never heat up a baby's milk in a microwave. Stir baby food well if it is heated in a microwave.
- Candles should be up high and out of reach.
- Put cold water in the bath first, and then bring up the temperature with hot water.

1

My child has burnt or scalded themselves.

2

Treat the burn or scald straight after the accident by running under cold water for 20 minutes. Do not use creams, lotions or ointments on the burn or scald.

3

For small burns take your child to the practice nurse or minor injuries unit. **For large or facial burns you should go to A&E.**