

Burn Injuries: Frequently Asked Questions

1. How long does it take for the burn to declare itself?

Once the burn has occurred it takes up to 48-72 hours for the burning process to complete itself. It is essential to stop the immediate source of heat by extinguishing the heat source, removing the patient's clothing and cleanse the patient's wounds. After 72 hours, the burn is at its full potential and treatment options should be decided.

2. Should I pop all the blisters?

Not all blisters should be removed. Small blisters that do not look like they are going to spontaneously erupt should be left on for a biological covering. Large blisters that are fluid filled should be removed completely.

3. Should the patient continue to move the affected area?

Range of motion and movement is a priority for burn patients. Ambulating improves both cardiac and pulmonary status; as well as decreasing the risk of deep vein thrombosis, contractures and complications. Range of motion exercises should be completed on all body areas affected to prevent joint tightness/stiffness, contractures, and increase function post injury.

4. What type of diet should the patient have?

Patients with burn injury have an increase metabolic rate due to this patient require increase calorie and protein intake. Patients should be on a high calorie/high protein diet. Considerations should be made for patient co-morbidities and calorie counts should be recorded on any patient taking an oral diet. If calorie counts are inadequate or the patient is unable to have an oral diet, considerations should be made for nutrition supplements.

5. Why does the burn hurt?

Burns are an extremely painful injury since with superficial or partial thickness burns the nerve ends are disrupted. Pain is a sign that indicates the burn is not full thickness and should possibly heal without surgical intervention.

6. What type of dressing should be used?

Dressing types are determined by body area affected, pain tolerance, need for long term dressing, need for frequent assessment of the wound. Refer to the wound dressing modules for full details.

7. How often should I change my dressings?

Acticoat duration is 5-7 days during this time the dressing needs to be kept moist. Silvadene needs to be changed daily and the wound thoroughly washed in between each dressing application.

8. Should you remove all the loose skin prior to dressing?

All the loose skin should be removed utilizing mechanical means and if needed surgical means. Washcloths, scissors and tweezers are the best tools for debridement.

9. Why do you shave the affected area?

All affected areas should be shaved and a one inch border surrounding the wound to prevent infection. Hair harbors bacteria and can increase the infection risk. Shaving should be completed during initial debridement and each dressing change if hair is noted in the wound.

10. Is there any special consideration to healed skin?

Once the affected area has healed it should be moisturized daily to prevent skin dryness, relieve itching and assist with skin tightness. Use unscented, dye free lotions for moisturizing the affected area. A newly burned area can be easily sunburn or frostbite, make sure to protect the skin from the environment.