

Burn Care at Home

This document will help guide you in taking care of your wound after discharge. While at home, follow the instructions below for information on diet, skincare, exercise, and pressure garments and splints.

Nutrition

- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. It will help your wounds heal faster. Make sure you eat nutritious foods high in protein and calories. These include meat, fish, eggs, cheese, peanut butter, beans, ice cream and milk shakes.
- Drink lots of water. It is important to have plenty of fluids when you have a burn. As your wounds heal, your nutritional needs will eventually return to normal.

Wound Care

- Protect your open wounds from scrapes and germs by keeping them covered with dressings as directed.
- Follow your wound care plan as prescribed by your Trauma Burn healthcare provider.
- If your arms or legs are burned, elevate them above your heart to improve circulation and reduce swelling.

Skincare

Dry / Itchy Skin

- Avoid scratching your new skin. Burns may damage your oil-producing glands, making your skin itchy and dry.
- Keep your newly healed skin moisturized with cocoa butter or a mild, unscented lotion without lanolin or alcohol. Eucerin and Lubriderm are two recommended brands
- Gently massaging the area or taking a shower may also help to relieve dry or itchy skin.

Blisters

- Check your skin every day for blisters or breakdown. New skin is fragile and thin. Blisters are common.
- Avoid tight clothing or shoes. White cotton tee shirts, socks and under wear are preferred. (Dye can cause irritation). Sweatpants or loose-fitting clothes are recommended. You may be more comfortable in one size larger than you usually wear.
- If blisters appear, do not break or pop them. Follow your wound care instructions if they break open.
- Protect blisters from rubbing on clothes, shoes or pressure garments. You may use a dry gauze dressing if necessary.

Temperature Sensitivity

New skin can be sensitive to temperature changes. Skin that has been deeply burned may not be able to sense temperature. Follow these action steps to decrease temperature sensitivity:

- Avoid icepacks, heating pads, electric blankets or any extreme heat or cold.
- Wear protective gloves if you are handling chemicals or cleaning solutions.
- Avoid direct sunlight for at least one year. Wear sunscreen (at least SPF 30) and hats. Cover your burned skin with clothing. If you have had a large burn, you may not be able to perspire to cool yourself off. In hot weather, be careful to stay cool.
- In winter dress warmly to protect from cold weather and frostbite and avoid being outside for long periods of time.

Discoloration or Pigment changes

- During the normal healing process, your healing burns and donor sites may become discolored. Discoloration varies with every person, depending on their natural skin color. People with dark skin may have light colored healing skin. Natural color may return eventually to most burns, except very deep ones.

- The time this process takes varies and is difficult to predict.
- You may elevate the burned extremity to help relieve discoloration on your arms and legs after walking or standing. This will eventually improve.

Scarring

The amount of scarring varies with every person depending on the severity of the burn and how your body reacts to the injury. Partial thickness burns may disappear within a few months. Deep partial and full thickness burns may build up scar tissue for over a year. Eventually, most scars will improve their appearance. You may receive more information on scars from the Trauma Burn Clinic. Scar treatment may include pressure garments that will be custom fitted for you, and laser treatments.

Make up and Shaving

- Consult with your healthcare provider at the Trauma Burn Clinic before starting to use cosmetics on facial burns. When you are able to use them, use sensitive skin products. There are special make up products for men and women with severe burns. The Trauma Burn Clinic Nurse can give you resources for obtaining these products.
- Avoid shaving lotions and creams with an alcohol base. You may need to try several products to find one that works for you.

Exercise

- Use your burned areas as normally as possible during the day. This will help prevent stiffness and prevent problems.
- Follow your prescribed physical therapy and occupational therapy plans. These may include home exercises to prevent skin contractures and stiffness.

Pressure Garments

You might have received pressure garments to help prevent scarring. Wear them as directed. They may need to be worn up to a year or longer. Wear them to your therapy and clinic visits so the fit can be checked.

Splints

You might have received splints to wear. Wear them as directed. Wash them with lukewarm water and mild soap as needed. Dry thoroughly.

Bring your splints to the clinic appointments. Call the clinic if you have problems with your splints.

When should I call a doctor?

Call your doctor if you have any of the following:

- Fever higher than 101.5 degrees
- Green, discolored, or excess drainage
- Increased pain
- New or increased redness around the wound
- Increased swelling, or other changes in wound appearance
- Foul smell from wounds
- New bleeding