



Burn Prevention #37-10-24

Burn Prevention: Protecting Those We Support

As caregivers and advocates, we play a crucial role in preventing burn injuries for those we serve. Understanding potential risks is essential for creating a safe environment.

Understanding the Risks

People with mobility challenges or slower reflexes are particularly vulnerable to burns. Here are some key factors to consider:

- **Spills and Scalds:** Carrying hot liquids can lead to spills, especially for those in wheelchairs or using mobility aids like canes and walkers. Burns to the lap are common in these situations.
- **Sensory Impairments:** People with reduced sensation, particularly in their hands and feet, may not recognize when something is too hot. This lack of awareness increases their risk of serious burns.
- **Cognitive Challenges:** Changes in intellect or awareness can hinder a person's ability to identify dangers, such as a tub filled with scalding water. This may lead to dangerous situations if they cannot respond effectively.

What Causes Burns?

Many things can cause a burn. Thermal sources, including fire, hot liquids, steam, and contact with hot surfaces, are the most common causes of burns.

Types of Burns

There are several kinds of burns: thermal burns (which include scalds, contact, flame, or grease), chemical burns, and electrical burns. Other causes include exposure to chemicals, such as cement, acids, or drain cleaners. Burns can also be the result of radiation, electricity, or the sun (ultraviolet or UV light).

Burn and Scalding Prevention Training



Signs of Burns

Burn symptoms vary depending on the severity or degree of the burn. Symptoms are often worse during the first few hours or days after the burn.

Burn symptoms include:

- Blisters
- Pain
- Swelling
- White or charred (black) skin
- Peeling skin

Healthcare providers classify burns by degrees of severity. Burn degrees include:

- First-degree burns are mild (like most sunburns). The top layer of skin (epidermis) turns red and is painful but doesn't typically blister.
- Second-degree burns affect skin's top and lower layers (dermis). You may experience pain, redness, swelling, and blistering.
- Third degree burns affect all three skin layers: epidermis, dermis, and fat. The burn also destroys hair follicles and sweat glands. Because third-degree burns damage nerve endings, you probably won't feel pain in the area of the burn itself, but rather adjacent to it. Burned skin may be black, white, or red with a leathery appearance.



Temperature Scalding Chart

Water Temperature (Fahrenheit)	Approximate Time for 1st Degree Burns
100 degrees	Safe for bathing
120 degrees	5 minutes
125 degrees	2 minutes
130 degrees	30 seconds
140 degrees	5 seconds
155 degrees	1 second

Preventing Scalding

Scalding is one of the most common and preventable types of injuries.

Avoid Distractions! Don't Try to Multitask!

Stay focused on only helping the person to bathe or shower! Never leave someone alone in a shower or tub! Be sure water is turned off completely. Check water temperature with your hand before helping someone into the shower or bath.

Practical Prevention Strategies

To mitigate these risks, consider implementing the following strategies:

- Always use insulated containers for hot liquids and foods.
- Serve food at safe temperatures, and allow it to cool if necessary.
- Place microwaves at a safe height, within easy reach, for all users to avoid spills.
- Arrange living spaces to minimize the need for carrying hot items.
- Install grab bars and non-slip mats in bathrooms to help prevent falls.
- Provide training for caregivers and support staff on burn prevention and safety awareness.
- Educate people on recognizing hot surfaces and liquids, using simple and clear language.
- Utilize adaptive utensils and tools that make it easier for people to eat and drink safely.
- Encourage the use of tools like long-handled spoons or cups with built-in straws to reduce the risk of spills.

- Conduct routine safety assessments in the home or facility to identify potential hazards.
- Ensure that smoke detectors and fire alarms are functioning properly.
- Make sure that there are anti-scald valves and showers/faucets installed.
- Use technology like shower thermometers and water sensor alarms to keep people safe.

When Should You Seek Medical Attention?

- **Deep Burns:** Burns that are red, blistered, swollen, and very painful.
- **Large Burns:** Burns that cover more skin than the size of the palm of your hand or go all the way around your arm or leg.
- **Infection:** Burns that are red, swollen, giving off a bad odor, or oozing liquid may be infected.
- **No Signs of Healing:** Burns that become more painful, red, swollen, or visible skin darkens in the burn site in the two to three days after the burn.

If any of the above are true, seek medical attention. If you have major injuries, please seek immediate medical attention!

Teams should discuss safety issues related to burns and make sure they are addressed in a person's plan.

Fast Facts

- Most adults will suffer third-degree burns if exposed to 150-degree water for two seconds.
- 73 percent of burn injuries occur in the home.

Conclusion

By being proactive and vigilant, we can significantly reduce the risk of burn injuries for those we support. Creating a safe environment requires awareness, education, and thoughtful modifications to daily routines. Together, we can ensure that everyone enjoys a safer, more secure living experience. Let's prioritize burn prevention and enhance the well-being of our community!