

# When Burns Happen Indoors: What to Do



Legacy Oregon Burn Center



# Indoor Safety

**Burns can happen** anywhere, not just outside where fires more commonly occur. Indoors, hot or boiling water, liquids, foods and oil can scald and cause serious burns. This pamphlet provides an overview of the different ways burns can happen indoors and what to do when these situations arise. There is also other general information about the Oregon Burn Center that we believe you will find useful.

## Indoor Safety

Support from the Emanuel Medical Center Foundation has helped make this information possible. If you would like to support the work of the Oregon Burn Center or Legacy Emanuel Medical Center, please contact the foundation at P.O. Box 4484, Portland, OR 97208. Or call 503-413-2786.

## Hot water is a major cause of serious burns

Scalds from hot water, hot liquids and hot foods are the leading cause of burn injuries in the United States for children under age five. A majority of these burns happen when hot tap water and other hot liquids are left within the reach of children. Even coffee and tea can be hot enough to cause a serious burn.

The elderly and the very young are most susceptible to hot water burns because of thin layers of skin and the inability to react quickly to the hot water source. Remember, hot water can burn anyone!

## Prevention

Keep hot liquids out of reach of children. Never leave young children alone in the bathtub or in the kitchen.

## Check the temperature

Being careful is not enough. Test the temperature of your home's water heater by letting your tap water run for three to five minutes. Then, test the temperature with a candy, meat or water thermometer. If the temperature is more than 120 degrees, your hot water heater is set too high. Remember, the microwave oven can super-heat liquids and food so test the temperature.

For information on the safest way to turn down your water heater, it is recommended that you call your local utility representative.



The amount of time it takes to receive a severe burn at the following temperatures:

<b>Water temperature</b>	<b>Time of a severe burn</b>
156 degrees	1 second
149 degrees	2 seconds
140 degrees	5 seconds
133 degrees	15 seconds
127 degrees	60 seconds
124 degrees	3 minutes

**Water boils at 212 degrees**

### **Put a lid on grease fires**

Cooking oil is hot — much hotter than water. It can catch fire without warning. Be ready! Always have a pan lid near you when cooking with oil or greasy foods like bacon.

If a fire starts in a pan, do not pick it up and carry it out of the house. Grease can splash out of a pan and burn you or small children and pets who might be underfoot. The best solution is to have a pan lid ready so you can carefully put it right over the fire and turn the burner off.

### **Here's what you need to remember:**

- If a fire starts in a pan, do not panic!
- Put the pan lid onto the fire.
- Turn the burner off.
- Carefully take the pan off the heat.
- Let it cool completely before taking off the lid.
- Never pick up the pan and move it!
- Never use water to put the fire out!



- Never leave a pan of oil or greasy food alone. A fire takes moments to erupt.
- Baking soda also puts out grease fires. Keep a box handy to sprinkle onto a fire. Fire extinguishers in the kitchen are also a good idea.

Remember, you have the ability to put out a grease fire right in your hands — the pan lid. It cuts the supply of oxygen that feeds the flames and puts the fire out. Whenever you're cooking with grease, keep the pan lid on the counter next to you so it will be handy.

### **If you are burned:**

- Stop, drop and roll slowly to put out the fire on your clothes.
- Once the fire is out, take off hot, greasy clothing quickly.
- Cool the burn with cool water — never ice — for about five minutes to stop the burning. Cool water lowers the skin temperature, stops the burning, helps numb the pain and reduces swelling.
- Cover the burn. After cooling the burn with water, cover it with clean, dry dressing, such as a cloth or bandage.
- Do not use ointments, sprays, butter or toothpaste — only cool water.

Finally, get medical help. Do not underestimate how serious a burn can be!

### **First aid for burns**

What do you do in case of a burn injury? Use this guide to see if you need medical care right away or if you can apply first aid.

If you are not sure, call your doctor, go to the ER or urgent care.



## **Burns that need medical attention right away:**

- Any burn larger than the size of your hand — for adults or children.
- Burns on the face, hands, feet or genitals.
- Electrical burn.
- Chemical burn.
- Any burn with other injuries or with breathing problems.

## **What to do:**

- Put out the fire and remove all clothing.
- Call 911 for large burns.
- For burns smaller than the size of a hand, apply cool water for about five minutes.
- Do not put cotton balls or home remedies (such as butter, eggs or ice) on the burn.
- If the burn covers a large area, keep the patient calm, comfortable and warm. Cover with a clean sheet or blanket.
- Keep the patient clean, warm and dry.

## **You can apply first aid on these burns:**

- Burns, redness or blisters on an area less than the size of your palm.
- Sunburn (see below for treatment).

## **What to do:**

- Apply cool water (no ice) for five minutes.
- Wash well with mild soap and water.
- Leave blisters intact.
- Cover with a clean, soft bandage.
- Apply antibiotic ointment.



- Give pain meds such as Tylenol, Motrin, Advil or aspirin (but no aspirin for children) as directed.
- Elevate burned arm or leg, if possible.

## **Sunburn — What to do:**

- Place a clean cloth with cool water on the area, no more than five minutes.
- Apply mild lotion.
- Drink more water.
- Give pain meds such as Tylenol, Motrin, Advil or aspirin (but no aspirin for children) as directed.
- Elevate burned legs.

## **Call your doctor:**

- If after using first aid, you have any of these symptoms:
  - Nausea or vomiting.
  - A fever of 102 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
  - Redness around burn gets larger after the first 24 hours.



## **Legacy Oregon Burn Center**

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[legacyhealth.org/burn](https://legacyhealth.org/burn)

