

Contact details

Care of Burns in Scotland (COBIS)
National Managed Clinical Network

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Notes

Chemical Burn Injury Information Leaflet



**Plastics Directorate
Specialist Services**

Chemical exposure is a frequent cause of burns.

Chemical burns tend to cause deep tissue damage, which is caused by prolonged exposure to the chemical substance.

Information that is required by the medical/nursing staff

- It is important that you tell the doctor which chemical caused the injury, as an antidote may be available to treat the chemical agent
- The amount of chemical to which you are exposed
- The time you were exposed to the chemical and how long for
- If you carried out any first aid following exposure to the Chemical

What to expect

The doctor will ask you about your injury and about you. They will be keen to know about any prescribed medication and about any medical history that you may have. You will then have a photo taken of the injury.

The doctor will then discuss the best course of treatment available. This treatment may involve washing the area with large amounts of water or other agent until the medical/nursing team is satisfied that the burning agents have been neutralized and then a dressing will be applied to the wound. Alternatively, you may be asked to irrigate the area every hour, under the shower. The nurses will monitor the skin between irrigations and they will apply cling film to the area to protect the wound.

If these courses of treatment are not satisfactory it may be necessary to take you to theatre to remove the chemical from the skin.

Because of the length of time these treatments may take, it may be necessary to admit you to the ward. You will be reviewed on a daily basis and your treatment will be discussed with you.

Cement Burns: Most patients comment that they only noticed mild irritation initially, but unless soaked clothing is removed immediately, this can quickly lead to severe damage of the skin.

Acid Burns: Certain acids penetrate the finger/toe nails and burn the pulp beneath without destroying the nails; therefore it is important that the nails are trimmed.

Important points

Please ensure that:

- You follow any instructions requested by the medical/nursing team
- You elevate the injured area, to allow any swelling to settle
- You drink plenty of fluids if you are not being taken to the operating theatre
- The wound is not allowed to dry out
- The wound is protected from infection
- That you keep the injured area moving, through a full range of movement as instructed by the physiotherapy/nursing team

If you have any questions then please ask a member of staff