

Chemical Injuries

- Chemical Burns
- Chemical Splash in the Eye(s)

Chemical Burns

What is it?

Tissue damage caused by strong acids, drain cleaners, paint thinner, gasoline and many other substances.

Usually, you are aware of such a burn and its cause. But sometimes you may not immediately recognize a burn caused by a milder chemical. As with some sunburns, the damage may develop hours after the exposure. Major chemical burns need emergency medical help. Minor chemical burn can usually be treated with first aid.

Plan of Action:

If you think you have a chemical burn, take these steps immediately:

- **Remove dry chemicals.** Put on gloves and brush off any remaining material.
- **Remove contaminated clothing or jewelry** and rinse chemicals off for at least 20 minutes, in a shower if it's available. Protect your eyes from chemical contamination.
- **Bandage the burn.** Cover the burn with a clean bandage. Wrap it loosely to avoid putting pressure on burned skin.
- **Rinse again if needed.** If you feel more burning, rinse the area again for several more minutes.

When to Seek Emergency Care:

Call 911 or seek immediate care for major chemical burns, which:

- Are deep, involving all layers of the skin
- Are larger than 3 inches (about 8 centimeters) in diameter
- Cover the hands, feet, face, groin, buttocks, or a major joint or encircles an arm or leg
- Might cause shock, with symptoms such as cool, clammy skin, weak pulse and shallow breathing.

If you're unsure you've been exposed to a toxic chemical, call a poison control center then call 911. There are two ways to get help from Poison Control in the United States: online at www.poison.org or by calling [800-222-1222](tel:800-222-1222). Both options are free, confidential and available 24 hours a day. If you seek emergency medical help, take the container or the name of the chemical with you.

Chemical Splash in the Eye(s)

What is it?

When any chemical splashes in your eye(s).

Plan of Action:

1. Flush your eye(s) with water.

Use clean, lukewarm tap water for at least 20 minutes. Use whichever of these approaches is quickest:

- Get into the shower and aim a gentle stream of water on your forehead over your affected eye. Or direct the stream on the bridge of your nose if both eyes are affected. Hold the lids of your affected eye or eyes open.
- Put your head down and turn it to the side. Then hold the lids of your affected eye open under a gently running faucet. If you have access to a work site eye-rinse station, use it.
- Young children may do best if they lie down in the bathtub or lean back over a sink. Pour a gentle stream of water on the forehead over the affected eye or on the bridge of the nose to flush both eyes.

2. Wash your hands with soap and water. Thoroughly rinse your hands to be sure no chemical or soap is left on them.

3. Remove contact lenses. If they don't come out during the flush, then take them out.

CAUTION

- Don't rub the eye — this may cause further damage.
- Don't put anything except water or contact lens saline rinse in the eye. And don't use eyedrops unless emergency personnel tell you to do so.

Seek emergency medical assistance:

After following the above steps, seek emergency care by an eye specialist (ophthalmologist) or call 911 or your local emergency number. Take the chemical container or the name of the chemical with you to the emergency provider. If readily available, wear sunglasses to help reduce sensitivity to light.