

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.

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