



Queen Victoria Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

A Guide to Burns Aftercare



Introduction

This booklet has been designed to give you advice and information regarding your care after leaving hospital. It provides some general guidelines about your treatment following a burn or scald and you will be advised which treatment is relevant for you.

The aim of burns aftercare is to control the amount of scarring you will have and to make you more comfortable.

If you have any queries about your care after leaving the hospital, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Emergency Burns Assessment Clinic (EBAC)

Tel: 01342 414010

Burns Unit

Tel: 01342 414440

Initial care

After your injury, the healed tissue changes, especially within the first six months after the accident. At first, the scars may look worse rather than better but then they will steadily improve over the next two years.

You will find that when you are exposed to very warm temperatures the scarring will become bright red and then dark purple when you are exposed to very cold temperatures. This is normal and occurs due to changes in the blood flow through the scar tissue. These changes will also occur on affected legs and feet if you stand for any length of time

Washing and creaming

When you were burned or scalded, the glands that produce the skin's natural oils were also damaged, so we need to replace these oils to keep the skin soft and supple.

The affected area(s) should be washed with baby soap three to four times daily and then the area massaged with the prescribed moisturising cream.

It is very important to ensure that the old cream is washed off using a mild soap and water before applying more as a build-up of cream and oil can cause blackheads and pimples.

Massaging

Massaging the affected area with the moisturiser helps reduce the tissue fluid within the scar and improves the texture and pliability of the scar. Soon after the wound has healed you will need to massage the area, using light pressure only, because the newly-healed skin is fragile and may blister or break down.

The pressure you use to massage the scars needs to be increased gradually over a few weeks. Initially, you may not enjoy this procedure, but with patience and perseverance you will grow to tolerate and perhaps even like it.

Pressure garments

You may need to wear a pressure garment. These are made out of a strong, elastane material which provides firm, even pressure over the affected area. You will be measured for your own individual garment and re-measured at intervals to see if the garment needs replacing. If you have been advised to wear a pressure garment you will be given your own individual information which will tell you how often you should wear them, how to put them on and how to look after them.

How does the pressure garment help the scars?

In burns and scalds you may find that the scar tissue becomes red, raised, firm/hard and/or itchy. This is called hypertrophic scarring. Regular creaming, massaging and the wearing of a pressure garment will control the scarring.

Compression of the burns scars alters the blood supply to the scars

and changes the cells and structure of the scar tissue making them softer, flatter, paler and more supple. Pressure also relieves the itching.

Physical problems that may happen

Areas that haven't healed on leaving hospital - These areas will be dressed by the EBAC. You must not get the dressings wet. If you do, please phone the EBAC or the burns unit for advice. If wet dressings are not changed an infection can get into the wound and cause a delay in normal healing.

Itching - This is a very common problem in patients who have sustained burns or scalds and can affect both the burned area and donor areas. Unfortunately there is no magic cure but following the instructions below may give some relief:

- bathe in cool, not cold, water
- wear cotton or polyester clothing and cotton sheets to sleep in - try to avoid pure wool or nylon as they cause you to become hot and start itching
- wear the pressure garment, if prescribed, as this will reduce the itching
- if you find that none of these work, you can ask your doctor to prescribe some medicine that will reduce the itching

Blistering - Small water blisters may occur if you knock yourself or sometimes pressure garments rub and cause them. This is quite common and usually stops after six months.

Treatment - pop the blister with a cotton bud, and apply a small dry dressing. If at all concerned, please contact EBAC.

Skin breakdown - Small areas of breakdown can occur from knocks, leaving small raw areas which may require a small dressing. We can show you how to do these when at the EBAC.

Privacy

At Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust we want everyone to feel comfortable and confident in how any of their personal information shared with us will be looked after and used.

1. Who we are

We are a public authority, an NHS Foundation Trust and designated as a data controller under current data protection legislation.

If you have any queries about your information and our privacy notice to you, please contact the Trust Data Protection Officer, Dominic Bailey.

Dominic can be contacted via email: dominic.bailey@nhs.net or by phone on 01342 306623.

2. How we collect information about you

We will collect your information when you complete the form on the next page.

3. How we will use your information

- Only to contact you about Burns Support Group events.
We ask you about your hobbies and interests in order to help us plan suitable events and enhance your experiences.

4. Who we will share your information with

- Your details will not be shared with anyone outside of those people directly involved in the Burns Support Group.

5. How long we will keep your information

- We will only keep your information for as long as you want us to. Please contact us at any time if you no longer want us to hold your information or contact you with news about events.

6. Keeping your information safe

- We take looking after your information very seriously. We have implemented appropriate physical, technical and organisational measures to protect the personal information we have under our control, both on and off line, from improper access, use, alteration, destruction and loss.
- Our staff are trained to handle your information correctly and protect your confidentiality and privacy.
- Only authorised staff have access to your information and only where it is appropriate to do so.

Burns Support Group at QVH

Do you have a burn?

Would you like to speak to others with
similar experiences?

It is hard to understand the impact a burn has on a person regardless of the injury. Previous patients tell us that it can be really valuable to meet others with similar experiences of burns and relatives can benefit from the contact too.

The group meet three times a year. The meetings usually consist of an activity (previous activities have been chocolate making, jewellery making to name a few) with lunch and drinks. The meetings are informal with options of gaining information on scar management, diet, psychological help or just a chat and a sharing of experiences.

The group is open to any adult over the age of 16 who have experienced a burn, or is a relative of someone who has experienced a burn of any type and any size at any age and have been treated at any hospital. If bringing your family and friends means that you would feel more comfortable coming along then they are very welcome.

This group offers a unique opportunity to not only get support from but also to give support to other burns survivors.

If you would be interested in coming along to one of our events please provide your details and we will add you to our mailing list database. Please fill in your information below and we will contact you with the dates and time of our next meeting or for more information contact our Burns Unit on 01342 414440.

I give permission to be contacted with information regarding the McIndoe Burns Support Group.

Name _____

DOB _____

Address _____

Email _____

Telephone No _____

Hobbies / Interests

Sign _____ Date _____

Please return the completed form to the The Adult Burns Support Group in the Burns Unit, Queen Victoria Hospital, Holtye Road, East Grinstead, RH19 3DZ





Other problems you may encounter when at home

Changes in behaviour - Any adult who has been through a traumatic experience and spent a period of time in hospital may show changes in behaviour. This is quite common. Queen Victoria Hospital has a dedicated psychological therapy service, which you can be referred to either during treatment or after your burn injury. Staff at the burns unit or EBAC can arrange this for you. A separate leaflet is available on request.

Nightmares - Nightmares or flashbacks of the injury are quite common. These will lessen through time and with support. It can help to talk through any bad dreams at a calm time the next day. If the nightmares continue you may find it helpful to talk to a member of the psychological therapy team (as above).

Disturbances to family life - Unfortunately, a burns injury can have a traumatic affect on the whole family. Often it occurs to the main wage earner which can have an effect on family life. We can try to help you with this, either by contacting the psychology department or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Dressings - Sometimes the dressings, as they reduce, can be changed by the community nurses closer to home. This can be discussed with members of staff within the Burns Centre or EBAC.

Swimming - This activity is greatly encouraged as it provides a good form of physiotherapy but, unfortunately, cannot be undertaken until all areas are healed. The pressure garment should be removed before swimming. Afterwards, ensure that all chlorine is showered off and cream the area thoroughly.

Sunshine - During the first year after injury, anyone who has been burnt or scalded will not be able to tolerate the sun's rays on their damaged skin as they may cause this delicate skin to blister. This also applies to the donor area.

Therefore, keep yourself covered with cotton clothing and if you have a facial burn or scald, a peaked cap or wide-brimmed hat should be worn when exposed to the sun.

Total sun block (e.g. SPF 50) should be used on all affected areas, including donor areas.

After the third year after the injury, you can be exposed to sunshine, ensuring you take great care by applying a suitable sun cream (e.g. factor 25) and staying out of the mid-day sun.

Always remember

With support and reassurance, most people who have sustained any degree of burn injury eventually settle down and lead happy, well-adjusted lives.

However, if you are experiencing major problems in any of these areas, the psychologist may be able to help – the Burns Unit can provide you with further information.

Contact details

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Burns Unit	Tel: 01342 414414
EBAC	Tel: 01342 414010
Burns Therapy Unit	Tel: 01342 414255

External links

Changing Faces

The Squire Centre
33-37 University Street
London, WC1E 6JN.
Tel 0845 4500 275
www.changingfaces.org.uk

British Association of Skin Camouflage

PO Box 3671
Chester
CH1 9QH
UNITED KINGDOM
Tel: 01254 703107
www.skin-camoufalge.net

Red Cross

UK Office
44 Moorfields
London
EC2Y 9AL
Tel 0844 871 11 11
www.redcross.org.uk

Please ask if you
would like this leaflet
in larger print or an
alternative format.