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Treating Burns: 1st aid to minimize pain and injury

By Buck Tilton

- 1. Stop the Burning Process. The faster the better--within 30 seconds,if possible. Burns can continue to injure tissue for a surprisingly longtime. No first aid will be effective until the burning process has stopped. Smother the "flames" with lots of cool water. Do not try to remove tar or melted plastic. Do not use ice.
- 2. Gently wash the burn with water and mild soap. Pat dry. Remove the skin from blisters that have popped open, but do not open blisters that remain intact.
- 3. Dress the burn with a thin layer of first aid ointment. Any antibiotic ointment from your first aid kit will do.
- 4. Wrap the burn with a thin layer of gauze, or apply clean dry clothing. Leave burns on the face, neck and hands may be left open tothe air. Covering wounds reduces pain and evaporative losses, but do notuse an occlusive dressing.
- 5. Re-dress the wound every day by removing old dressings, re-washing,"re-ointmenting," and putting on clean dry covering. If the wound has been oozing, you may have to soak off old dressings with clean tepid water.)
- 6. If it hurts a lot, take ibuprofen, probably the best over-the-counter painkiller for burn pain (including sunburn).
- 7. If you have no ointment, no dressings, and/or no skill, leave the burn alone. The burn's surface will dry and/or form a scab-like covering, and eventually heal.

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