



First aid for minor burns and scalds

Any type of commercial kitchen has potential dangers. Burn injuries in this setting are frequent; employees sustain contact burns from hot surfaces, such as pans, grills and oven racks, flame burns from gas rings, and scald burns from water, oil and food.

This is a fast-paced industry which prioritises customer service, food quality and efficiency. Developing a culture of safe practice, maintaining a safe environment and a high level of employee knowledge is paramount. The commercial kitchen should be considered a hazardous area. Employers and employees should be familiar with the location and use of alarms, fire extinguishers and fire blankets. In the event of a burn, appropriate first aid will minimise damage.

Cooling the burn stops the burning process. Uncooled burnt skin can continue to worsen for 48 hours. Deep burns require skin grafts to heal, resulting in lost days at work, lack of income for the employee and lost expertise, man power and related costs for the employer. If a burn heals within 10 days, scarring is highly unlikely. If a burn takes more than 3 weeks to heal, scarring is significant in most cases. Adequate cooling can reduce the need for surgery.

Remove the burning area from the source of the burn

- For flame burns with clothing on fire – Stop, drop and roll.
- Remove affected clothing and jewellery

Cool the burn

The best and proven way to cool the burn is with 20 minutes of cool running water. Tap water is fine. Recommended water temperature is between 8 and 20°C. This needs to be applied ideally within 1 hour of injury, but is still beneficial within 3 hours of injury. Intermittent water interspersed by cool wet towels is a second, less effective option.

Do NOT use ice. The area of burning skin requires a good blood supply to provide oxygen and nutrition. Ice or icy water will constrict the blood vessels, reduce blood supply to that area and can worsen the burn.

We do NOT recommend the use of water gel product as a first aid measure. Cool water is the only proven method of cooling a burn successfully to minimise damage. If a water gel product is used to cover the wound, this must follow the application of 20 minutes of cool water. Water gel products include items such as Burnaid or Burnshield.

Cover the burn

- Covering the burn relieves pain
- Cover with a clean, loose, non-constrictive bandage.
- Do not burst blisters until seen by a doctor.
- Do not use butter, oil, salves or creams – they may retain heat.

Seek medical advice

- Any chemical or electrical burn
- Any burn involving hands, face, genitals
- If it appears deep
- If it is bigger than the palm of your hand
- If smoke was inhaled



Burns facts and figures

Over \$7.3M The total estimated cost of work-related lost time for burn injury in 2009-10.

\$20,000 The average cost of a claim made for burn injury per claim in 2009-2010

27 days The average time lost from work for a burn injury per claim in 2009-10.

(Department of Commerce: WorkSafe 2012)

For those admitted to Royal Perth Hospital with a burn injury due to cooking in 2011

67% The percentage who needed surgery to heal

27% The percentage who received adequate burns first aid

10 days Average length of hospital stay for those needing surgery to heal

(Department of Health: Burn Service of WA 2012)

Top tips for burn prevention

- Keep your workplace clean and organised
- Keep an oven glove or tea towel handy for moving hot pans
- Clean up spills to avoid accidents
- Ensure OHS training is up to date
- Transfer and dispose of oil only when cool
- Keep aerosol cans clear of heat sources
- Ensure you know where fire extinguishers and blankets are kept and how to use them
- Ensure that electrical items are kept in good working order
- Ensure that chemicals are handled by trained users

KNOW YOUR BURNS FIRST AID. This is **NOT** 20 minutes wasted; it could save you **27** days off work, **10** days in hospital and **NO** scarring!