

# Burn Education for Outpatients

## What is my main problem?

A burn is damage to the skin or tissues caused by heat, chemicals, electricity, liquids, sunlight or radiation. How bad the burn is depends on the size of the injury, how deep the burn is, the part of the body burned, age of the patient, and past medical history and whether or not there are other injuries. After a burn the area will be reddened, sometimes blistered, and painful.

## I need to...

- Watch for signs of infections. Call my doctor if I notice any of the following:
  - My skin hurts more instead of less.
  - The skin around the burn looks more red.
  - The area is warmer than normal and appears swollen.
  - There is a change in drainage (increased amount, change in color, bad odor).
- Wash and dry my hands before I change my dressing.
- Always use a new dressing that is clean and dry.
- Change my dressing at least once a day. My doctor may tell me to change it more than once a day.

## I need to know that...

- Burns change in color and texture as they heal.
- The healing process varies from person to person.
- There are 3 depths to a burn wound:
  - Superficial (1<sup>st</sup> degree) burns are close to the surface and least serious. These burns are reddened and painful but will heal on their own.
  - Partial thickness (2<sup>nd</sup> degree) burns are deeper and more serious. Partial thickness burns appear red and moist with blisters and are very

painful. They are often pale pink to white in color. These burns usually heal by themselves.

- Full thickness (3<sup>rd</sup> degree) burns are the most serious and deepest. The burn may appear dry and leathery and be white, yellow or brown. The amount of pain varies. These burns must be seen and followed by a doctor.
- If I have a question, I will call my family doctor.

### **Why it is important for me to do this.**

I need to follow these instructions to help my burn heal and not cause further damage.