



## Burns Unit

# Advice following a burn or scald injury

### Information for patients, parents and carers

#### Introduction

You or your child have sustained a burn or scald injury where the skin has been damaged. The amount of damage will determine the length of time the wound will take to heal. If this is a superficial burn, this will usually take five-ten days to heal. If the burn or scald has not healed after this time further treatment options may be discussed at the clinic appointment.

#### Dressings

If there is a dressing on the burn or scald injury:

- Please keep this clean, dry and do not remove until the next dressing change is due.
- An appointment will have been made to have the dressings changed and the burn checked.
- Painkillers can be taken at least one hour before the dressing clinic appointment. This will help to relieve pain during the change of dressing - providing enough time has passed since the last dose of painkillers.
- If the dressing gets wet or falls off, then this needs replacing. Please seek advice if you are unsure of what to do.
- Swelling is normal with a burn or scald wound. To help relieve swelling elevate (lift or raise) the affected area on pillows. For facial burns sleep/sit upright when resting.
- Please ensure hands are thoroughly cleaned if you or someone else has to attend to the dressing at any time.
- We usually advise that children and young people do not to return to school/nursery whilst in dressings. However, for some patients, this is not appropriate and the doctors or nurses will offer different advice.

#### Signs of Infection

Burn and scald wounds often leak and produce wound fluid, this is normal. If you or you or the wound develop any of the following then seek urgent advice:

- Excessive wound leakage (the bandages or dressings are saturated with fluid)
- Increasing pain
- High temperature
- Cold hands or feet with a hot body
- Unpleasant odour

- Not wanting to eat or drink/diarrhoea and vomiting
- Unusually sleepy
- Redness or swelling in the affected area or a rash
- Flu like symptoms

**If any of the symptoms are present then please seek urgent medical advice.**

### **Pain Management**

Burn pain can be one of the most intense and prolonged types of pain. There is pain involved in the treatment of burns as the wounds must be cleansed and the dressings changed.

Pain can affect many aspects of a person's life, including sleep, mood, activities and relationships. Poor pain control can reduce function, their quality of life and ability to recover well from burn injury.

Medical/nursing staff will ask patients to describe their level of pain using a pain chart such as a numerical scale or smiley faces.

To manage pain levels at home a variety of medicines may be given to be used regularly. These medicines should be taken as prescribed and should keep pain at a comfortable level. Common medication you may be given include:

- Paracetamol
- Ibuprofen

If the pain becomes unmanageable at home please contact the Burns Unit or your nearest Accident & Emergency department.

**Please check the Paracetamol content of all medications and beware of overdosing.**

### **For further details**

Contact Burns Unit (Ward 1B) Tel: 0151 252 5400.

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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