

Useful Information

You may find the following links helpful:

www.supportingchildrenwithburns.co.uk

www.getselfhelp.co.uk

Mindfulness Apps

Headspace, Breathe or Smiling Mind can be downloaded from the app store and Google Play store. Some people find them really useful to help relax.

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.

Burns Unit

Psychological responses following your child's burn injury

A booklet for carers and parents



What is a traumatic event?

A traumatic event typically involves a threat to safety. However, any situation that is frightening, overwhelming, and beyond a person's control may be experienced as traumatic.

Facts of the event don't define whether it was traumatic, rather it is an individual's emotional response. Examples include being in an accident, being injured, serious illness, or undergoing some medical procedures. This can be related to yourself, or to another person such as your child.

Burn injuries are one of the most common accidents experienced in childhood. If your child has experienced a serious burn resulting in a hospital admission then it is possible that both you and your child may develop some emotional reactions as a result of the trauma.

What to expect / common reactions

It is common for children and adults alike to be upset, angry, confused, anxious, and scared after a traumatic event. For parents, seeing your child go through a traumatic event can be traumatic in itself.

Witnessing a traumatic event and/or being part of an event can lead to a number of common reactions including:

- Nightmares

- Memories or pictures of the event
- Avoiding anything that might remind you of the event
- Getting angry, upset or anxious more easily
- Being jumpy and on the lookout for danger
- Not being able to concentrate
- Not being able to sleep
- Changes in eating habits
- Physical complaints, e.g. stomach ache or headache

Most people will experience some of these reactions for a month or so after a traumatic event; this may be minimal or more significant. Parents should be mindful that these symptoms may be part of a post-traumatic stress response, which is common and understandable. Over a few weeks, most people will start to come to terms with what happened, and these reactions will slowly start to decrease. Sometimes this process takes longer.

Things that may help:

- Talk about what happened to someone you trust
- Get back to your usual routine as soon as you are able to, e.g. going back to work when you feel ready and seeing friends

- Eat and exercise as regularly as you can
- Try to do things you usually enjoy, as much as possible
- Keep hobbies and activities going, even if you may not feel as motivated to do them
- Have a relaxing bedtime routine and try to get a good amount of sleep each night
- Try relaxation or mindfulness exercises, e.g. using apps such as Headspace or Breathe

Try not to:

- Beat yourself up about it. Post-traumatic stress symptoms are not a sign of weakness. They are a normal reaction of any person to an unusual and unexpected experience
- Bottle up your feelings. Sharing these often helps us to feel better over time
- Expect the memories to go away straight away. The way you feel about the memory should change over time but do not expect this to happen right away
- Expect too much of yourself. Give yourself a break while you adjust to what has happened
- Stay away from other people

- Let yourself get too tired

How do I access further support / Who can I speak to?

As a parent, if you continue to experience ongoing post-traumatic stress difficulties, it may be helpful to meet with one of the clinical psychologists on the burns team to talk about your experience and to think about any further support you may require. Further support can also be provided via your local GP, which is something we can discuss with you.

What if my reactions continue for a long period of time?

Some people do experience post-traumatic stress symptoms for a longer period of time which can start to interfere with your day to day work and activities. Again, it may be helpful to discuss this with one of the burn team clinical psychologists or alternatively you can access support directly via your GP.

Contact Details

If you would like to enquire about further support you can contact us on the number below:

Psychological Services
Dr Natalie Holman
Tel: 0151 252 5586
(9am till 5pm Monday–Friday)