

Burn Wound Healing: Common Questions

Why does a healing burn itch?

This is a normal part of healing. It is caused by new nerve growth or dry skin. Scar tissue does not have the oil glands that are found in healthy skin so it itches. Itching is often worse at night.

How can I keep my child from scratching?

- Distract your child with activities such as crafts or games. This keeps your child's hands busy and will keep them from scratching. Watching TV does not keep their hands busy.
- If the itching gets to be too much, pat the scars. Do not scratch. Scratching may feel good at first, but it can make the itching worse.
- Keep your child's fingernails short. Use socks on babies hands to keep them from scratching.
- Put fragrance- and dye-free lotion on scars and massage 3 to 4 times a day.
- Ask your child's doctor about medicines that can help lessen itching.
- Use unscented laundry detergent.

How should I care for my child's skin?

The new skin is fragile.

- Your child should always use a sunblock with an SPF of at least 30.
- Tight clothes or scratching can cause blisters or skin tears. If that happens, treat the open areas this way:
 - Wash the area with soap and water. Pat the area dry.
 - Use a small amount of antibiotic ointment on the area until it heals. Cover it with non-stick gauze.
 - Do not use a band aid on the scar. The new skin is fragile and may tear when you take off the band aid.

To help with healing, have your child eat a diet high in protein and calories.

Will the area be normal again?

Skin color. Melanin gives our skin its color. It is found in the top layer of skin. This layer is lost when a burn occurs. The deeper the burn, the longer it takes for the skin color to return. It may take more than a year for the skin color to return and look more like the rest of the skin. Very deep burns may never regain full color.

Scars. It normally takes burn scars 1 to 2 years to mature, or become flatter and softer. Lotion and massage will help soften the scars. The scars may get lighter, but will never go away.

Feeling. The injured nerves need time to re-grow. It may take 1 to 2 years before normal feeling returns. Very deep burns may never have normal feeling again.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.