

Talks **ZONE**

Safety Talks
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T0311

Coping with minor cuts, burns

It is a rare workplace that is free of cuts, scrapes and burns. They can happen to any one of us, regardless of the precautions we take.

Faulty equipment, slips, trips, someone else's mistake . . . these are just a few of the factors that can lead to minor injuries of the skin. They are a lot less likely to occur, of course, when we:

- Follow the correct procedures for using utensils, tools or machinery that can cause harm.

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment for the task at hand.

- Keep the workplace free of clutter, flammables and sharp objects.

- Know how to use the correct extinguisher for the type of fire that occurs.

- Recognize and report hazardous or potentially hazardous conditions (including near-misses).

There are occasions when proper precautions must give way to proper response. Here are some guidelines from the Mayo Clinic on how to deal with minor cuts, scrapes and burns.

CUTS AND SCRAPES

Stop the bleeding. If minor cuts and scrapes do not stop bleeding on their own, apply gentle pressure with a clean cloth or bandage continuously for 20 to 30 minutes and if possible elevate the wound. If blood spurts or continues flowing after continuous pressure, seek medical assistance.

Clean the wound. Rinse it with clear water (soap can irritate the wound). If dirt or debris remain after washing, use tweezers cleaned with alcohol to remove the particles.

To clean the area around the wound, use soap and a washcloth. There is no need to use hydrogen peroxide, iodine or an iodine-containing cleanser.

Apply an antibiotic. A thin layer of an



antibiotic cream or ointment such as Neosporin or Polysporin will help keep the surface moist. These do not make the wound heal faster, but can discourage infection and help the body's natural healing process. If a rash appears, stop using the ointment.

Cover the wound. Bandages can help keep the wound clean and keep harmful bacteria out. Change the dressing at least daily or whenever it becomes wet or dirty. If you are allergic to the adhesive used in most bandages, switch to adhesive-free dressings or sterile gauze held in place with paper tape, gauze roll or a loosely-applied elastic bandage.

Get stitches for deep wounds. A wound that is more than six millimetres (1/4-inch) deep or is gaping or jagged-edged and has fat or muscle protruding usually requires stitches. Adhesive strips or butterfly tape may hold a minor cut together, but if you cannot close the wound easily, proper closure within a few hours reduces the risk of infection.

Watch for signs of infection. See your doctor if the wound is not healing or you notice any redness, increasing pain,

drainage, warmth or swelling.

Get a tetanus shot. If your wound is deep or dirty and your last shot was more than five years ago, a tetanus booster may be in order. Get it as soon as possible.

MINOR BURNS

The three classifications of burns are:

First-degree (only the outer layer of skin is burned, but not all the way through).

Second-degree (first layer is burned through and the second layer, the dermis, is also burned, causing blisters,

severe pain and swelling).

Third-degree (both layers are seriously burned; this is an emergency).

For minor burns, including first-degree burns and second-degree burns that are limited to an area no larger than 7.6 centimeters (three inches) in diameter:

- **Cool the burn.** Hold the burned area under cool (not cold) running water until the pain subsides. If this is impractical, immerse the burn in cool water or cool it with cold compresses. Cooling reduces swelling by conducting heat away from the skin. Do not put ice on the burn (this can cause the body to become too cold and cause further damage to the wound).

- **Cover the burn with a sterile gauze bandage.** Do not use fluffy cotton, or other material that may get lint in the wound. Wrap the gauze loosely to avoid putting pressure on burned skin. Bandaging keeps air off the burn, reduces pain and protects blistered skin.

- **Do not apply butter or ointments to the burn,** and do not break blisters. Doing so increases the risk of infection.

- **Take an over-the-counter pain reliever.**

The material contained in this document has been prepared from sources believed to be accurate and reliable. Application of this information to a specific worksite should be reviewed by a safety professional. Anyone making use of the information set forth herein does so at their own risk and assumes any and all liability arising therefrom. Specific medical advice should be obtained through consultation with a physician or other trained health care practitioner.

The Quiz

These questions are meant to help you remember what was discussed today — not to test your patience or challenge your intelligence. The answers are at the bottom of the page. Cover them up, and complete the quiz as quickly as you can.

1. Taking all reasonable precautions will eliminate the risk of cuts, scrapes and burns.
TRUE ____ FALSE ____
2. Is good housekeeping an acceptable way to prevent minor injuries?
YES ____ NO ____
3. Which of these are among ways to treat cuts and scrapes:
 - A. Stop the bleeding.
 - B. Clean the wound.
 - C. Apply an antibiotic.
 - D. Cover the wound.
 - E. All of the above
4. Stitches are usually required for wounds that are more than six millimetres (one-quarter inch) deep.
TRUE ____ FALSE ____
5. Which of these is NOT a sign of infected skin:
 - A. Redness.
 - B. Increasing pain.
 - C. Shortness of breath.
 - D. Swelling.
 - E. Warmth in the area of the wound.
6. Is a second-degree burn considered to have occurred when the second layer of skin (dermis) is partly burned?
YES ____ NO ____
7. Which of these should be used to cool a minor burn:
 - A. Cool running water.
 - B. Ice.
 - C. Cold compress.
 - D. Rubbing alcohol.
8. Is there an approved first aid kit near your work area containing all the items necessary to treat a minor cut, scrape or burn?
YES ____ NO ____ DON'T KNOW ____

Hold These Thoughts

The severity of a burn is not always obvious and if it is not treated properly, infection might occur.

Burns can cause irreparable damage in seconds. You must be able to respond appropriately and get medical help as quickly as possible. Know the location of the first aid kit, the nearest telephone and medical facility.

The most serious burns, third-degree, involve all layers of the skin and cause permanent tissue damage. Fat, muscle and even bone may be affected. Areas may be charred black or appear dry and white. Difficulty inhaling and exhaling, carbon monoxide poisoning, or other toxic effects may occur if smoke inhalation accompanies the burn.

For major burns, call 911 or emergency medical help. Until an emergency unit arrives, follow these steps:

■ Do not remove burned clothing. However, do make sure the victim is no longer in contact with smoldering materials or exposed to smoke or heat.

■ Do not immerse large severe burns in cold water. Doing so could cause a drop in body temperature (hypothermia) and deterioration of blood pressure and circulation (shock).

■ Check for signs of circulation (breathing, coughing or movement). If there is no breathing or other sign of circulation, begin CPR.

■ Elevate the burned body part or parts. Raise above heart level, when possible.

■ Cover the area of the burn. Use a cool, moist, sterile bandage; clean, moist cloth; or moist towels.

ANSWERS: 1. False, 2. Yes, 3. E., 4. True, 5. C., 6. Yes, 7. A. and C., 8. Your answer



Weekly Safety Meeting

For the Record

Date of Meeting: _____

Location: _____

Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____

Topic: _____

Department: _____

Meeting Leader: _____

In Attendance:

It really happened...

A shop teacher was using a parts washer to clean a lawn mower part. The washer, designed for a water-based cleaning solution, was filled with a petroleum-based combustible solvent instead. A plugged drain in the washer resulted in a low level of solvent in the reservoir, which allowed the immersion heating element to become exposed. The solvent overheated and burst into flames, causing an explosion. The teacher fought the fire with a chemical extinguisher, but his shirt caught fire. He wasn't wearing any personal protective equipment and sustained first-degree burns.

This incident underscored the need to establish and enforce safe procedures for using parts washers, including the following:

- Use only the cleaning solutions recommended by the manufacturer.
- Wear the appropriate eye, face, and hand/fore-arm protection.
- Follow the manufacturer's safety and operating instructions.
- Ensure that the fusible link on the lid is intact.
- Ensure that material safety data sheets (MSDSs) are readily available for all hazardous and flammable substances used in the workplace.
- Follow all warning labels on equipment.
- Provide workers with the information, training, and supervision necessary to ensure their safety when using equipment.

Note: *TalksZone* weekly safety meetings are not intended to take the place of your own safety procedures. Always consult and/or review your procedures before attempting any work.