

## Preventing Burn Injuries

By Douglas D. Brannon, Esq., [Brannon & Associates](#)

Thousands of Americans are rushed to emergency rooms with burn injuries every year. While treatment for these injuries is getting better, understanding burns and taking preventative measures is your best chance to make sure your family is safe and well.

There are three different kinds of burns – first degree, second degree and third degree. First degree burns penetrate the top layer of skin, but are not serious. The skin at the burn site will be slightly red and can begin to peel; it will begin to heal within a few days to a week after the burn happens. This is the most common kind of burn. Second degree burns penetrate the second layer of the skin and are more serious. In these cases, the skin may become red and blister. It will start healing within several weeks of the burn. Third degree burns are the most serious [burn injury](#) and can be fatal. The burn damages all three layers of skin and almost always requires a skin graft. Scarring can be severe and recovery can take several months. Burns can be caused by anything from hot liquids and steam to chemicals and fire.

You can begin taking steps to prevent burns today. The kitchen is a great place to start because a great number of burns can occur here. Keep your towels and pot holders away from the stove and make sure to turn pot handles toward the center of the stove when you are cooking. If you have children, try to keep all pots and pans on the back burners so they are out of reach of small hands. Roll up your sleeves when you are cooking to prevent clothing from catching fire. Make sure all bowls used in the microwave are made to be there. It is also a good idea to keep cleaning products out of reach of children.

Fireplaces and heaters also cause burns around the home. Keep heaters away from rugs, carpets, pillows and window treatments and never leave a heater on when you are not in the room. Put a screen in front of your fireplace to keep children and pets from accidentally burning themselves in the fire. Always keep a fire extinguisher handy to put out any unexpected flare ups in your fireplace.

If you or a loved one are burned, there are several steps you can take to reduce the chances of significant long term injury. For first degree burns, run cool – not ice cold – water over the burn injury. Allow the skin to cool down completely and breathe before applying an ointment. For a second degree burn, put cool – again, not ice cold – water or a cool compress on the burn to reduce swelling. Some second degree burns require medical intervention, so visit a doctor or call emergency personnel to be safe. With third degree burns, medical attention is required as soon as possible as scarring and infection can quickly set in. It is also possible that the burn has damaged nerve endings so the victim may not feel pain, but it is still necessary for a doctor visit. If the burn injury victim is in pain, try to run cool water over the burn until medics arrive.

After the victim has gotten the proper medical attention, consider retaining the services of a dedicated [personal injury attorney](#). This person should be well-versed in the law and understand the substantial, and possibly permanent, injuries a burn can cause. A [personal injury lawyer](#) will be able to help you be reimbursed for past and future medical expenses, pain and suffering, lost

wages, property damage or permanency of injury. Remember, call a burn injury lawyer before you call your insurance company or sign any documents.

**About the Author:**

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