Chemical Burn

Chemical burns are usually caused by contact of the skin with a substance that contains acid or lye. Most of the time these burns cause only surface damage like a sunburn. Blistering, infection, and injury to deeper tissues can also occur. First aid treatment includes immediately and thoroughly rinsing the exposed area for 15-20 minutes under large amounts of running water or in a tub. The water should be moderately warm and of low pressure. Begin the rinsing at the site of contamination, then the eyes and face if they are involved or close to the affected area. Remove all contaminated clothes (including footwear and jewelry). Remember that the chemical continues to cause damage to your skin and deeper tissues as long as it remains in contact with your skin. Avoid rubbing the affected area. Keep it covered with a clean wrap. Do not try to "neutralize" a chemical burn. This means do not add a lye to an acid burn for example. This can increase tissue injury.

A minor chemical burn will usually heal without further treatment. If there are blisters, do not break them. Do not remove the dead skin or blister from over a burn. Burn creams or ointments are generally not recommended. Rest and protect the affected area until the burn is healed. Medications to prevent infection and to reduce pain may be needed.

Avoid exposure to toxic chemicals that can cause poisoning or burns. Never store these products in food or drink containers. Avoid mixing chemicals such as ammonia and bleach which give off dangerous fumes. Store chemicals out of the reach of children. Use paints, ammonia, and petroleum products in well-ventilated areas. Use protective gloves when handling dangerous chemicals.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is a pus-like drainage from the area.
- The area becomes warm and red.
- You develop a fever or feel ill.
- You develop breathing difficulty, headache or other serious problems.

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