

Myth: butter's better on a burn

One of Dr. Lai's patients burned his arm on a hot cookie sheet. The child stopped further injury by immediately running the area under cool water. However, his well-meaning great-aunt decided to then apply butter to the burn. Please, do NOT put butter immediately on a burn. It's like putting butter on a hot skillet.

We're not sure where the myth of putting butter on a burn comes from. A better idea for pain control, after applying cool water for a few minutes, is to offer the child a pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin).

Burns caused by fire or burns covering large body areas are best treated at a hospital, but your first response, as you call 911, should be to get that burn in cool water. Run the water for several minutes. To avoid shock or extreme cold injury, do not use ice water. Don't remove clothing stuck to skin but go ahead and put the burn and the stuck clothing in cool water.

Most burns sustained at home are mild or may cause blisters. Burns are easily infected because when you burn away skin, you burn away an excellent barrier to germs. Washing the affected area with soap and water and applying a topical antibiotic such as Bacitracin twice daily can prevent infection. Avoid popping blisters- you will take away a protective layer of skin.

Please remember that unlike for cookie batter, butter is not better for burns. Please pass this post on to anyone you know who cares for your children...it's "hot off the press."

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Revised 5/17/2015