

# When Burns Happen Outdoors: What to Do



Legacy Oregon Burn Center



# Outdoor Safety

**Outside,** we're exposed to barbecues, outdoor stoves, fireworks, gas and other situations that can leave you and your family vulnerable to accidents and serious burns. This pamphlet provides an overview of the different ways burns can happen outdoors and what to do when they happen. We've also included other general information about the Oregon Burn Center that we hope you find useful.

Support from the Emanuel Medical Center Foundation helped make this information possible. If you would like to support the work of the Oregon Burn Center or Legacy Emanuel Medical Center, please contact the foundation at P.O. Box 4484, Portland, OR 97208. Or call 503-413-2786.

## Other resources

Check this resource for more information on safe ways to burn yard debris.

## Backyard burns are a leading cause of burn injuries.

Every year, thousands of people across the United States suffer serious burn injuries during the outdoor burn season. While some of these injuries are minor, many require staying in the hospital for a long time.

Those at greatest risk are young children and elderly people who are less able to move away from a fire that is out of control. It is important to remember that anyone can get burned at any moment when near or around a fire. At the Oregon Burn Center, we know that almost every burn injury is preventable.

## Prevention

This list outlines ways to keep everyone safe during the outdoor burn season.

- **Always** keep a five-foot safety zone around the fire and remind children that this is an area for adults only.
- **Never** use gasoline or an accelerant to start an outside brush or trash fire. Gasoline vapors can ignite even at very cold temperatures. Since gasoline fumes are invisible, it is impossible to determine where an explosion will occur.
- If you spill gasoline on yourself, stop immediately and then wash the gasoline off your skin. If gasoline spills on clothing, remove and launder immediately.
- **Never** leave a fire burning unattended. You never know who might get near it when you are not



present. Be careful of burning yard debris in a burn pit. It is easy to lose balance and fall into the pit, making it very difficult to escape the fire.

- **Always** keep a hose, charged with water, nearby to put out a fire quickly.
- **Always** check with your local fire department on whether burning is allowed in your area and what kinds of materials can be burned.
- **Carefully** check what you will be burning and remove anything that might explode or ignite, such as bottles of glue, aerosol cans, batteries and flammable liquids.

**Remember** that even after a fire is out, the ashes can remain hot for 24 hours or longer. Maintain your safety zone to keep kids from playing in this area.

Finally, remember that alcohol and fire do not mix. Alcohol impairs judgment and that can lead to preventable burn injuries. Please do not drink while backyard burning.

## Safe ways to handle gasoline

**Do use gasoline in your car but:**

**Do not prime your carburetor.**

**Do use gas in your lawnmower but:**

**Do not pour gas in a hot mower.**

**Do keep gas in a closed, vented container away from heat sources and out of reach of children but:**

**Do not use gas in an enclosed place.**

**Do use gas for your power tools but:**

**Do not use gas to start trash fires.**

**Do use gas in well ventilated areas but:**

**Do not use gas as a cleaner.**

## Other resources

[safekids.org](http://safekids.org)

[aap.org](http://aap.org) (search for summer tips)

[legacyhealth.org](http://legacyhealth.org)

## Prevention

**This list outlines ways to keep everyone safe when you and your family are having fun this summer.**

### • Safety Zones:

- One of the easiest ways to keep your children safe this summer is to maintain a five-foot safety zone around all campfires, outdoor grills, backyard burn areas and fireworks sites. Remind your children that the area inside the safety zone is for adults only. Supervise children at all times.

### • Campfires:

- Never use gasoline to start or maintain a campfire. This is the most common way people of all ages receive burns. Gasoline vapors ignite even at very cold temperatures. Since gasoline fumes are invisible, it is impossible to determine when and where an explosion will occur.
- Children often receive burns when they play around a campfire. Remember that even after a fire is out, the ashes can remain hot for 24 hours or longer. Maintain your safety zone and keep children from playing in this area even after the fire is out.

### • Fireworks:

- Some very serious injuries and significant property loss are common around the July 4th holiday. Follow all laws regarding safe use of fireworks. Use common sense and supervise children at all times. The Oregon Burn Center recommends attending a professional fireworks display instead of using fireworks at home.
- The most common fireworks injury in children occurs when playing with sparklers. The tips of sparklers can reach temperatures of 1,000 degrees or more. Keep all fireworks, including sparklers, away from children under age 5.
- Playing with fireworks in an unsafe manner is not worth your child's fingers, hearing or eyesight.



## • Barbeques, outdoor grills and other hot cooking appliances, remember to:



- Maintain your safety zone.
- Follow manufactures' safety directions for each appliance.
- Be especially careful with deep fat turkey fryers.
- Never use gasoline to start or maintain an outdoor cooking fire.
- Never leave an outdoor grill or cooking appliance unattended while in use.

Finally, remember that alcohol and fire do not mix. Alcohol impairs judgment, which often leads to preventable burn injuries. Please do not drink around campfires, fireworks or outdoor cooking appliances.

## What to do in case of a burn injury

### First aid for burns

What do you do in case of a burn injury? Use this guide to see if you need medical care right away or if you can apply first aid.



### Burns that need medical attention right away:

- Any burn larger than the size of your hand — for adults or children.
- Burns on the face, hands, feet or genitals.
- Electrical burn.
- Chemical burn.
- Any burn with other injuries or with breathing problems.

### What to do:

- Put out the fire and remove all clothing.
- Call 911 for large burns.

- For burns smaller than the size of a hand, apply cool water for about five minutes.
- Do not put cotton balls or home remedies (such as butter, eggs or ice) on the burn.
- If the burn covers a large area, keep the patient calm, comfortable and warm. Cover with a clean sheet or blanket.
- Keep the patient clean, warm and dry.

### You can apply first aid on these burns:

- Burns, redness or blisters on an area less than the size of your palm.
- Sunburn (see below for treatment).

### What to do:

- Apply cool water (no ice) for five minutes.
- Wash well with mild soap and water.
- Leave blisters intact.
- Cover with a clean, soft bandage.
- Apply antibiotic ointment.
- Give pain meds such as Tylenol, Motrin, Advil or aspirin (but no aspirin for children) as directed.
- Elevate burned arm or leg, if possible.

### Sunburn — What to do:

- Place a clean cloth with cool water on the area, no more than five minutes.
- Apply mild lotion.
- Drink more water.
- Give pain meds such as Tylenol, Motrin, Advil or aspirin (but no aspirin for children) as directed.
- Elevate burned legs.



## Call your doctor:

- If after using first aid, you have any of these symptoms:
  - Nausea or vomiting.
  - A fever of 102 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
  - Redness around burn gets larger after the first 24 hours.



### Legacy Oregon Burn Center

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[legacyhealth.org/burn](https://legacyhealth.org/burn)

