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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

If you are unhappy with the advice you have been given by your GP, consultant, or another healthcare professional, you may ask for a second (or further) opinion.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Caring for your burn injury (adults) (page 1 of 3)

This leaflet contains advice to help you to care for your burn injury.

Dressings

The dressing applied to your burn will protect the wound and help it heal. It is important that you keep your dressings clean and dry to help prevent infection. It will be necessary for your dressings to be changed if:

- they become wet or very dirty
- they fall off or become very loose
- they smell offensive.

The nurse will tell you when your dressings are next due to be changed. This will either be in the Burns Clinic, with your GP practice nurse, or you or a member of your family may have been taught how to change the dressings at home.

Infection

A wound infection needs prompt treatment. It is important to be aware of the signs of infection:

- redness around the burn
- increased swelling of the affected area
- increased pain
- fever
- feeling generally unwell
- fluid oozing through the bandage.

If you notice any of these signs and are worried that your burn may be infected, please contact the Burns Unit as soon as possible (01722 345507). We may re-arrange your appointment so we see you sooner.

Physiotherapy

If your burn is affecting your movement, for example if it is on your hand or over a joint, you will be seen by a physiotherapist. They will give you some simple exercises to do to maintain your range of movement of the affected area. If they make you a splint, you must wear it as instructed. If you develop some long-standing problems you may need to see the therapy team for a number of months after your burn has healed.

The Burns Unit
01722 345507

Pain and itching

Your burn is likely to be painful. If you have been prescribed painkillers, make sure you take them regularly. Remember to take them before your appointment.

As your burn heals it may become itchy. Try not to scratch the newly healed skin. Moisturising the area and wearing loose fitting, cotton clothing should ease the itching. If this doesn't help, anti-histamine medication can be bought over the counter at your local pharmacy.

Nutrition

A healthy, balanced diet will help heal your burn. Protein rich foods are particularly beneficial, such as milk, eggs, cheese, meat. Make sure you keep well hydrated.

Moisturising and massage

Once your burn has healed, you will need to moisturise your healed skin as it will be dry. You should use a simple, non-perfumed moisturiser. Massage the cream in to the healed skin 2-3 times a day. Massage involves medium to firm pressure in small circular movements over the affected area. It is very important that the skin is cleansed in-between moisturising as a build-up of cream can cause skin irritation.

Managing scarring

Following a burn injury some degree of scarring is likely. The severity of scarring is determined by a number of factors:

- depth of the burn
- length of time your burn has taken to heal (the longer the healing time, the greater the risk of scarring)
- your skin tone

If you have had a deep burn that has taken a long time to heal or you have had a skin graft you may develop some hypertrophic scars. These are scars that are red, raised, hard and sometimes sensitive and itchy. As you heal, the clinic nurse will discuss scarring with you and will refer you to our Scar Management Clinic if necessary. There are treatments available to help improve the appearance of your scars:

- moisturising and massage
- silicone gels or sheets
- pressure garments
- laser therapy
- camouflage make-up.

Scarring can take up to 2 years to settle and some people will need treatment for this length of time. You will be reviewed every 3-4 months once treatment begins.

Sunscreen advice

It is very important to protect healed skin from the sun. Wear a high factor sun cream that protects against UVA and UVB rays. Cover up where possible and avoid the midday sun.

Psychological issues

After a traumatic injury, it is common to experience some of the following:

- distressing memories and/or nightmares of the injury
- difficulties in adjusting to your new appearance
- worries about the impact of the injury on your family.

If you are experiencing any of these feelings, speak to the nurse or your GP. It may be beneficial for you to see a clinical psychologist.

B.U.G.S (Burns Unit Group Support)

B.U.G.S is a charity run by volunteers who provide help and support to those affected by burn injuries. Please talk to a nurse if you would like more information.

Useful websites

www.bugssalisbury.co.uk

www.changingfaces.org.uk

www.burnsurvivorsassociation.com

www.dansfundforburns.org

www.katiepiperfoundation.org.uk