



Burns: outpatient follow-up

patient information

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The burn centre offers you an [outpatient treatment programme](#) for the follow-up of your burn injuries. This means that you may return home and no longer need to remain in hospital. However, you'll still be expected to come to the hospital regularly. During these consultations, we'll assess how your burn injuries are healing and determine what further support may be required.

This brochure [contains instructions for looking after for your burn injuries](#) at home. It's important you follow these instructions as closely as possible. If healing doesn't progress as expected, or if you have questions, please contact the burns centre or talk to your home visit nurse. The contact details are available at the back of this brochure. We're always here to help you.

HOME CARE FOR BURN INJURIES: INSTRUCTIONS

WOUND CARE

To assist you with wound care, [home nursing](#) will usually be arranged. In some cases, you, or a family member, may be able to look after the wound (subject to appropriate instructions). You'll receive more information about this during your outpatient burns care consultations at the hospital.

How often wound care is required varies from person to person. For example, it may be needed daily or every other day. You'll receive personalised instructions from the burn centre.

The dressing [may need to remain in place](#) until a specific date.

- In that case, home nursing care is usually not arranged and the dressing will be checked and removed during your outpatient burns care consultation.
- If this is the case, you may not shower for a while as the dressing needs to remain dry.

To arrange home nursing, you'll need a [wound care nursing certificate](#). This certificate contains instructions regarding the care of your burn injuries. It has been drawn up for you and needs to be given to the home visit nurse.



The doctor will also provide an [electronic prescription for pain medication and wound care supplies](#). You should collect them from the pharmacy as soon as possible, before the home visit nurse comes to your house.

You may contact a home visit nurse yourself through your health insurance fund, organisations such as the Wit-Gele Kruis or by contacting a self-employed home visit nurse. If necessary, the nurse at the burn centre will assist you with this.

To ensure that wound care proceeds smoothly, you need to ask the home visit nurse to call you **approximately one hour before the appointment**. This is necessary to take the prescribed pain medication in good time and, if required, shower.

Please make sure that you have the wound care supplies, the wound care home nursing certificate as well as a health insurance sticker available when the home visit nurse comes to your house.



Check the following at home every day:

- ✓ Your body temperature using a thermometer.
- ✓ Whether the dressing is still properly in place.
- ✓ Whether there is any leakage: a grey or brown discolouration of the outer dressing is normal, but wound secretions should not seep through the edges. The outer dressing should also not be soaking wet. Abnormal leakage is when your clothing is wet as well.

Contact the home visit nurse and if necessary the burn centre:

- ✓ If the pain is not under control despite correctly following the prescribed pain medication schedule.
- ✓ If the dressing has an unpleasant smell.
- ✓ If the dressing has shifted and the wound is no longer covered.
- ✓ If there is abnormal leakage.

SHOWERING

The best and simplest way to clean burn injuries is by showering with running water. Taking a bath should be avoided.

- Bandages or elastic net dressings may already be removed before showering. Bandages can be washed at 90°C and reused afterwards.
- The dressing itself should only be removed after you have washed yourself. Make the dressing wet under the shower to loosen it so it can be removed easily. When removing adhesive dressings, a remover may be used if necessary.
- Gently wash the burn injuries using skin-neutral soap ('soap-free soap'), shower gel or shower oil (pH 5, for example Eucerin®).
- Use a clean flannel and a clean towel for every shower.
- Adjust the water temperature so that it feels comfortable. To allow the water to flow gently over the burn injuries, you can put a clean flannel over the shower head and use it to rinse the burn.
- After showering wrap the wound in the clean towel while awaiting wound care by the home visit nurse. If the location of your burn injury allows it, you can also put on a clean bathrobe.

If there's a risk that you may fall or feel unwell, you need help when showering. In that case, you'll receive a certificate for "assistance with personal hygiene".

MOVEMENT EXERCISES (MOBILISATION)

As burned skin tends to contract during the healing process and [scar formation](#), the physiotherapist will give you movement exercises. It's important to follow these instructions carefully and regularly.

Particularly in case of burn injuries near joints, these exercises help prevent future mobility problems of the joint.

The physiotherapist at the burn centre will give you a practical guide with photographs to help you perform the exercises correctly.

If necessary, you'll also receive a prescription for outpatient physiotherapy near you.

REST AND ELEVATION

In case of burns affecting the extremities, such as hands, feet, forearms or lower legs, you'll be asked to keep the burned body part [elevated](#) during the first few days (or until further notice).

- If you have to keep your hand elevated, this means your hand needs to be positioned higher than your heart. Do not use a sling, as this may cause additional shoulder problems.
- To elevate your foot, lower leg or forearm, you may use cushions.



Hand higher than the heart



Elevation of the hand



Elevation of the foot

If you have burn injuries on your leg or foot, the physiotherapist will explain how best to move around. Crutches are not permitted, as they don't allow you to maintain elevation.

To cover long distances, use a [wheelchair with a leg support](#). For transport within the hospital, a wheelchair is available in the reception area. You may also borrow a wheelchair with leg support through your health insurance. You'll pay a small rental fee or deposit.

Why is elevation required?



It's normal for burn injuries to swell (*oedema*), particularly in case of burn injuries near limbs. This swelling restricts the oxygen supply to the skin cells, causing the cells to break down more quickly. This means the burn injury takes longer to heal resulting in an increased risk of infection and the possible need for surgery. Keeping the burn injury elevated helps to reduce swelling.

PAIN MEDICATION

A burn injury itself, as well as the care of the burn injury, is painful. You'll receive a pain medication schedule together with a prescription for pain relief medication.

- Make sure you always follow the instructions in the pain medication schedule meticulously to ensure good wound care.
- Don't forget to take your pain medication approximately **one hour before the start of wound care**. This applies both to wound care at home and to check-ups at the hospital.
- Please note: a **driving ban** applies for certain types of pain medication, such as morphine derivatives.

TRANSPORT

If you're unable or not permitted to drive yourself, due to the location or severity of the burn injuries or because of the prescribed pain medication, you must arrange alternative transport to and from the hospital yourself. Ask support from family members, relatives or friends.

If you're unable to find a solution yourself, the team at the burn centre can help arrange transport for you.

HOME SUPPORT

If your burn injuries make it difficult for you to carry out household tasks or other daily activities such as personal care, support can be arranged.

This support may consist of:

- Domestic help (cleaning, ironing).
- Family assistance (various household tasks such as cooking, laundry or shopping).
- Home-delivered meals.
- Applying for a personal alarm system.
- Applying for assistive equipment such as a hospital bed, commode chair, wheelchair, walking stick or walker.
- Home nursing (wound care, assistance with personal hygiene, help with aftercare).
- Psychological support to help process the accident.

If, after reading this information, you feel that you need support, please inform the nurse, social worker or care coordinator in good time. They will do their utmost to help you as soon as possible. However, some services involve external waiting lists.

The start-up of psychological support at home will always be coordinated by the psychologist or care coordinator of the burn centre.

The [contact details](#) of the social worker, psychologist and care coordinator are available at the back of this brochure.

AFTERCARE

Fortunately, most superficial burn injuries heal within two to three weeks. After healing, superficial burn injuries may cause **skin changes** such as redness, dry skin or discolouration. With appropriate and proper aftercare, these problems usually disappear spontaneously after several months up to one year.

Whether a burn injury will result in a permanent scar depends on the individual. Factors include the depth of the burn, the type of burn and your skin type.

General aftercare for a burn consists of regularly **moisturising** the skin with a neutral cream or lotion (for example Nivea® or Eucerin®) and using a **high-protection sunscreen with factor 50** for one year.



More information about the aftercare of burn injuries is available in our brochure entitled **Burns: treatment and aftercare**, available on www.uzleuven.be/en/brochure/701616, or by requesting it at the burn centre.



CONSULTATION IN HOSPITAL

Even during an outpatient treatment programme, where a large part of the care takes place at home, you'll be expected to attend regular consultations at the hospital. These may include outpatient burn injury care consultations at the burn centre or aftercare consultations with the burns surgeon.

- Before each consultation, you must register using your identity card at the [registration kiosk](#) in the hospital reception area. Only then will you be entitled to reimbursement from your health insurance. You may also register via the *Mynexuzhealth* app once you're at the hospital.
- After registering you receive a [QR code](#). You need to scan this upon arrival in the waiting area of the outpatient centre or the aftercare consultation. This way the nurse knows you're there.
- You may be accompanied by someone. Please limit this to one person.
- Request any [certificates and prescriptions](#) you may need at the start of the consultation.

OUTPATIENT BURN CARE CONSULTATION

- At the burn centre
- Weekly (unless otherwise agreed, depending on your situation)
- Follow-up of the healing process

During an outpatient burn care consultation, the **healing of the burn injury** will be assessed. The nurse will determine whether the physiotherapist, burns surgeon, intensive care specialist, psychologist or social worker need to be involved.

If **wound care** is carried out during the consultation:

- Take your pain medication one hour before the wound care, according to the prescribed schedule.
Please note: if you're taking pain medication based on morphine derivatives, you're not allowed to drive. You'll need to find someone to accompany you to hospital.
- Bring your own ointments to avoid additional charges.
- Upon arrival immediately let the nurses know that you are fasting or if you require additional pain medication.

Fasting

- To help prevent anxiety during wound care, additional medication may sometimes be administered. Depending on the type of medication, you may therefore need come to the consultation on an empty stomach. You'll be informed in advance how long beforehand you must stop eating and drinking.
- Please note that after the treatment, you may need to remain at the hospital for some time until the medication has completely worn off. You may only drink again once the doctor has given permission and afterwards you may eat.



During the consultation, you'll also receive [information about the aftercare](#) of healed burn injuries.

For some patients, the burns surgeon may decide that a [surgical procedure](#) is necessary. This may be required, for example, when the burn is taking longer than two or three weeks to heal, depending on the location on the body and the type of burn injury.

Before the operation, a preoperative anaesthetic consultation will be scheduled, where you'll receive clear instructions regarding fasting and the use of your home medication. The operation itself will always take place during a planned hospital admission.

AFTERCARE CONSULTATION

- At the general consultation with the burns surgeon
- Every three to six months, for a period of one to two years (unless otherwise agreed, depending on your situation)
- Aftercare for (deeper) burns

For the aftercare of deeper burns where further scar monitoring is required, an [aftercare burns consultation will be scheduled](#). During this consultation, any problems related to the burn injury can be identified and monitored.

An aftercare consultation is a multidisciplinary consultation. This means that healthcare professionals from different disciplines are involved. The team responsible for your follow-up consists of:

- a burns surgeon and their assistant
- a physiotherapist
- a psychologist, or care coordinator
- a social worker
- an orthopaedic technician specialised in pressure garments, silicones, braces and splints

Important: always bring your pressure garments, silicones, braces and/or splints with you to the aftercare consultation, so that the team can assess whether they need to be replaced.

In addition to the physical care of the scar, there is also room to discuss the processing, difficulties and possible consequences you experienced following your burn injury. We also want to support you throughout this part of the healing process. Do not hesitate to raise any such problems.

Scar follow-up care is highly individualised. For example, children may sometimes experience scar-related problems during growth and puberty. For this reason, children are often monitored for a longer period.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CERTIFICATE OF ABSENCE

If necessary, the doctor will provide a certificate of absence for school or work. This certificate will remain valid for the entire period required for the burn injuries to heal completely.

If you require an extended period of absence because you are not yet able to return to work, or if you wish to start adapted work duties, this can be discussed during the aftercare consultations or with your doctor.

CONTACT DETAILS

For questions or problems you can call the burn centre **night and day**:

- tel. 016 34 87 50
- tel. 016 34 87 56
- tel. 016 34 87 52

- **Nursing care coordination** tel. 016 34 11 25
zorgcoördinatie.brandwonden@uzleuven.be

Doctors

Burn intensive care specialist tel. 016 34 40 17

Burns surgeon tel. 016 34 87 21

- **Social worker** tel. 016 34 86 20
- **Psychologist care coordination** tel. 016 34 17 94
- **Physiotherapists** tel. 016 34 05 61
- **Pressure garments - VIGO** tel. 016 34 07 55

You can find our full team, including names and photos, at <https://www.uzleuven.be/en/intensieve-zorg-8>.

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Duplication of this text and these illustrations shall always be subject to prior approval of the UZ Leuven Communications department.

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