

News Release

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Goodness, Gracious: TTUHSC Burn Expert Gives Tips on Safety When it Comes to Summer Burns

Having fun in the sun, barbecuing and watching fireworks with family and friends are some of the best times in the summer. They can also be the most dangerous times if you and your loved ones aren't careful and safe.

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) burn surgeon John Griswold, M.D., said during the summer, he and his colleagues see burn injuries which could be avoided. He provided tips to staying safe when it comes to avoiding the three most commonly seen categories of burns in the summer.

"The first is exposure to the sun— sunburns", Griswold said. "The second are the outdoor recreational activities which involve heat or flames, such as barbecuing, building a bonfire or campfire. And of course, the last one is firework-related burns."

Griswold said the best advice is to always be aware of potential dangers and to plan ahead in case of emergency.

Minimizing sun exposure and avoiding sunburns:

- Wear sunscreen because clothing does not provide enough protection from the sun.
- Sunscreen should be at least 25 SPF. Anything higher doesn't make much of a difference.
- Sunscreen needs to be reapplied every 90 minutes to two hours, especially if you're in a pool or sweating, because the sunscreen can get washed off.

Staying safe around open fires and barbecues:

- Keep children at a safe distance away from open fire or grill.
- Have a responsible and sober person do the barbecuing.
- Keep the area protected. Everyone should stand clear of open fires and barbecue grills.

Enjoying Fireworks:

- Keep toddlers and children at least 100 yards away from firework site.
- Only the person who is experienced and responsible should shoot off the fireworks and the rest should be observing at a safe distance.
- Alcohol and fireworks don't mix: Whoever is shooting off fireworks should not be drinking.
- Wait until the firework is done burning. Don't relight fireworks.

Griswold shared that mild burns on the surface of the skin can be treated at home with a few easy methods.

“Burns that are in the first- and second-degree level are treated with daily dressings,” Griswold said. “Those wounds like to be mildly moist, so we recommend an ointment and a dry gauze on top of that. Each day the wound should be cleaned under lukewarm water. Letting the water run over the wound will actually remove most of the bacteria, so you don't need to scrub or scrape.”

Griswold recommended keeping ointments like Neosporin or Aquaphor on hand to apply to lower-level burns.

If the burn is more severe, the size of a hand or in specific places like the face, hands or over a joint, Griswold said to see a doctor or go to an emergency room.