

# FULL CIRCLE HAND THERAPY

YOU'RE IN GOOD HANDS



## HAND BURNS

Our hands are at greater risk for burns because they are often handling a variety of objects. Hand burns occur when cells in the skin are injured due to contact with heat, electricity, chemicals or radiation. When a hand is burned, the skin can become very tight, making it hard for a person to use his or her hand normally.

## CAUSES

There are four types of hand burns: thermal, electrical, chemical and burns from radiation. Thermal burns are from contact with something very hot like fire, hot water or grease. Electrical burns are from contact with electricity. An example of an electrical burn is when a child sticks a finger in a light socket. Chemical burns are caused by contact with household or industrial chemicals. Radiation burns are caused by the sun, tanning booths, sunlamps or radiation therapy for cancer treatment.

## SYMPTOMS

Hand burns can cause redness, swelling, infection, loss of skin and loss of skin colour. If not treated early, hand burns can lead to finger, thumb and wrist tightness. Our skin has layers; the greater the degree of burn means more parts of the skin are injured and the burn is worse. Burns are classified from least amount of damage (superficial) to the most amount of damage (full thickness). When the burn affects the deeper layers of skin, it can become tighter and take longer to heal.

## TREATMENT

The treatment of a hand burn depends on the severity of the burn. Superficial burns require wound & scar management, and range of motion exercises. Partial and full thickness burns will require wound care, possible skin grafts by a hand surgeon and early hand therapy to prevent stiffness of the joints and skin (scarring). The treatment of hand burns has become more advanced as newer wound care bandages assist with healing.



## HOW CAN WE HELP?

Your health care team will refer you to us within days after a burn to achieve the best outcome. We may make an orthosis to position the hand and will help with cleaning the wounds and applying bandages. As the burn heals, we will help to keep the scars from becoming too tight. Compression garments are often recommended to help control the scarring. Therapy will also include teaching you exercises to improve motion in the fingers and strength of the hand.