

BURNS AND ITS TREATMENT

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Burns are common during winter, as we use more of heating appliances at this time of the year. If you are prepared and equipped for this emergency, it is easy and heartening to treat the worst cases; otherwise, it becomes tedious and embarrassing for both the patient and the Physician. As I had to deal with several cases of burns and gained a little experience, I liked to discuss this subject.

First of all let us study burns. To define and differentiate, burns are produced by dry heat to the body surface, whereas Scalds are produced by moist heat (steam or hot fluids). There is a third type of burn produced by Chemicals (Acids or Alkalies), X-rays, Electricity, Lightening and Frost.

There are Six degrees of burns. They are :—

1. Scorching or superficial redness of the skin. In this type there is congestion of blood in the area of the burn on the skin, but there is no destruction of the tissues. Repeated scorching produces pigmentation and thickening of the skin.

2. In the 2nd degree of burns the cuticle is raised, *i.e.*, a blister is formed which is full of serous fluid.

3. In the 3rd degree of burns the cuticle is destroyed which involves destruction of Sensory Nerve Endings which are left exposed. Burns of this variety are very painful. They may produce shock and collapse, if they are sustained on face, chest, abdomen and genitals or are of extensive character.

4. In the 4th degree of burns the whole thickness of the skin and the subcutaneous tissues are destroyed.

5. In the 5th degree, muscles are involved and destroyed.

6. In the 6th degree, a part or a whole limb is charred.

In the last three varieties, the collapse and shock is rare owing to a complete destruction of the Sensory Nerve Endings, but serious toxæmia and contraction of muscles result from scarring.

Signs and Symptoms

There are three kinds of signs and symptoms that are produced by burns (1) Generals, (2) Focal, and (3) Local.

1. General Symptoms are : 1. Shock, 2. Collapse, 3. Restlessness, 4. Crying etc. They are the immediate effects of burns. The late general symptoms that follow are (1) Toxæmia, (2) Fever, (3) Anæmia etc.

2. Focal symptoms vary in different persons. They are (1) Suppressions of urine, (2) Gastritis, (3) Duodinal ulcer and (4) Pneumonia, etc.

3. Local symptoms depend upon the degree of the burn. (1) Erythema, (2) blister formation, (3) destruction of skin, (4) destruction of Sensory nerve endings and (5) destruction of muscles etc.

Treatment

1. In case of burns of the 1st degree, apply *Urtica Urens* lotion 1/10 or *Cantharis* lotion 1/10 to the part, and give a dose of *Cantharis* 6 or 30, if there is burning sensation.

2. In cases of burns of the 2nd degree apply *Hypericum* lotion 1/20 at once to relieve the pain and give *causticum* 30 by mouth which soothes the burning sensation. This procedure magically stops the crying of a child and will help you to dress the part. Cut open the blister by a needle and apply *Hypericum* lotion on the raw surface, apply vaseline gauze over the whole area and dress with a bandage. Give *Causticum* 30x 3 doses to be taken every 3 hourly. Advise the patient to keep the part warm.

3. In Burns of the 3rd degree, treat the general symptoms first.

Give *Causticum* 30 for the burning sensation and pain.

Give *Cantharis* 30 for blister formations, burning sensation and urinary complaints.

Give *Heper Sulph* 30 for fainting, due to burns.

Give *Ars. alb.* 30 for fever, restlessness, depression.

Give *Stram.* 30 for high fever, delirium.

Treat the local condition with *Hypericum*, *Cantharis* lotion, or *Calendula* lotion 1/20 if suppuration threatens.

Vaseline Gauze is the best dressing, but if the granulation of the wound is delayed, give Petroleum 30 by mouth. Petrol. follows Cantharis well. If scar formation is defective give Graphitis 30. If the discharge from the wound is foul smelling give Ars. alb. 30. If the wound of burn takes a septic turn, Hepar sulph, Pyrogen and Silicea will help you to cure.

4. In cases of the 4th, 5th and 6th Degree of burns the patient may not show symptoms of pain, as the sensory nerves are destroyed.

Measure should be taken to prevent suppuration and gangrene formation. Calendula and Picric Acid lotion 1/10 will greatly help in this by stimulating the healing process.

Toxæmia that always follow with symptoms of fever, debility, restlessness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhœa etc. must be very carefully treated. Remedies like Ars. alb., Pyrog., Secale cor., Ant. tart., Phos., Sulph., Stram., Verat. alb., etc. are our sheet anchors.

Pneumonia, Anæmia and debility may be the terminating symptoms. We must watch for them and treat the very onset of these symptoms. For prevention of scarring, Graphitis follows cantharis well. Causticum prevents contraction of tendons.

Sterilised vaseline dressing is good enough in all degrees of burns. Antibiotics, Cortisone, Blood transfusions may look rational and scientific, but they are measures not deep enough to stimulate vital reaction and help the patient to complete recovery.