

# Responding to Chemical Burns

## Know Your Chemicals

The following chemical groups can cause chemical burns:

- ◆ reducing agents such as sodium, potassium and lithium used in metal cleansers and soldering processes
- ◆ strong acids such as sulfuric, muriatic, tannic and hydrofluoric
- ◆ bleaching agents
- ◆ strong bases such as lye

## What Are Chemical Burns?

Chemical burns are different than heat burns in two ways: They usually produce no heat, though the victim may feel a burning sensation, and they go on burning until every bit of the chemical is removed. This is because the chemical reacts with body tissue to cause the burn. The longer the chemical remains on the body, the deeper the burn.

## Prevention

- ✓ Follow safety procedures to prevent chemical burns.
- ✓ Read the label before using any chemical and know the hazards involved.
- ✓ Follow instructions for the chemical's use, storage and disposal.
- ✓ Always wear the appropriate protective equipment.
- ✓ Know how to react quickly to a chemical emergency.

## First Aid

- ⊕ Know the quickest route to the emergency shower and eyewash station. You should be able to get there in 15 seconds or less.
- ⊕ Get under running water as fast as possible and stay there for at least 15 minutes.
- ⊕ Remove contaminated clothing after you're in the shower.
- ⊕ Use tap water or a garden hose only if a shower is not available.
- ⊕ Cover the burn with dry, sterile dressings.
- ⊕ Get medical attention immediately.
- ⊕ Avoid using neutralizing solutions or ointments on the burn.
- ⊕ Watch for shock symptoms: clammy, pale skin; rapid pulse; irregular breathing; nausea; confusion; and enlarged pupils.
- ⊕ Treat shock by keeping the victim warm and lying down with feet and the burned areas raised. Turn the victim's head to the side if he or she is vomiting and give cool water if medical help is more than an hour away.



## Eyes

- ⊕ Go to the eyewash station and turn your head sideways, with the affected eye below, so that chemicals won't wash into your other eye.
- ⊕ Remove contact lenses and let water flow for 15 minutes or more.
- ⊕ If you must use water from other sources, avoid spraying the water directly on your eye; the pressure can cause damage.
- ⊕ A helper should pour water over the bridge of your nose, letting it flow over your eye.

