Emergencies – Burns: Chemical and Electrical

PURPOSE:
To prevent further injury and promote healing of burned area.

CONSIDERATIONS:
1. Follow first aid instructions on the label of chemical container, if available.
2. In cases involving some powder or dry chemicals, it may not be appropriate to flush with water. If a dry chemical is involved, carefully brush the chemical off the skin with a gloved hand or a cloth, if possible, and check package or package insert for emergency information.
3. Water temperature should be cold to tepid.
   Washing should be done with gentle flow.

EQUIPMENT:
Water
Dry sterile dressing – clean if sterile is not available
Gloves – if available

PROCEDURE:
1. Adhere to Standard Precautions.
2. Explain procedure to patient.
3. Chemical burns of skin:
   a. Wash away chemical with large amounts of water using a hose or shower, if possible, for at least 20 minutes.
   b. Remove victim's clothing from the involved area, but avoid spreading chemical to unaffected areas. Cover the burned area with clean, dry dressing.
   c. Refer to medical treatment.
4. Chemical burns of eye:
   a. Wash face, eyelid, and eye with large amounts of water for at least 20 minutes.
   b. Turn victim's head to the side, hold the eyelid open, pour water from the inner corner of the eye outward, making sure the chemical does not wash into the other eye.
   c. Cover affected eye with dry, sterile dressing and tape in place. DO NOT permit patient to rub his/her eyes.
   d. Refer to medical treatment.
5. Electrical Burns:
   a. Look for two burn sites – entry and exit. Tissues beneath may be severely damaged.
   b. Cover burn injuries with a dry, sterile or clean dressing. Give care to minimize shock.
   c. DO NOT cool burn(s) with water. Look for painful, swollen and deformed extremities.
   d. With burn victims of lightening, look and care for life-threatening conditions (i.e. respiratory or cardiac arrest). Victim may also have fractures, including spinal, so DO NOT move him or her.

AFTER CARE:
1. Document in patient's record:
   a. Incident and degree of injury.
   b. Chemical which caused burn, if applicable.
   c. Treatment provided.
   e. Referral to medical care, if indicated.
2. Contact physician to report the incident and obtain further orders.

REFERENCES:
Lippincott Manual of Nursing Practice 9th edition 2010