

Keep patients warm by covering them with a clean sheet or blanket. Applying clean linens can also decrease pain severity by reducing air movement over burned tissue. Continuously monitor the patient and treat for shock, which can occur even with burns that are less than 5 percent of TBSA.

For significant upper body burns, elevate the patient's head and chest 20–30 degrees to minimize upper body edema. If the burn is accompanied by suspected spinal injury, secure the patient on a long spine board with full spinal immobilization and elevate the head end of the board. Be prepared to provide considerable emotional support to the patient.

Additional treatment for specific types of burns follows.

Thermal Burns

The first priority, as previously indicated, is to extinguish any burning or smoldering clothing using the National Fire Protection Association's time-honored practice of "Stop, Drop, and Roll." With this technique, a person on fire is instructed not to run, but to drop to the ground immediately and then roll back and forth or be rolled by rescuers until the flames are extinguished. At the same time, rescuers can cover the patient with a coat or blanket to smother the flames if water or a CO₂ fire extinguisher is not immediately available. Do not use a chemical fire extinguisher. Do not swat at the flames with a blanket or jacket; doing so only fans the flames and makes them larger. Extinguish the flames and then remove any clothing that is burned, singed, or smoldering (Figure 19-16■).

If thermal burns are due to a hot liquid, remove all wet items of clothing (especially diapers) because they can hold the hot liquid against the skin, increasing the duration and thus the severity of the burns. Additionally, some fabrics, especially those used in outdoor athletic apparel, melt when sufficiently heated and may leave a hot adherent residue on the patient's skin. Do not attempt to pull this material from the skin because doing so may cause additional damage.

Do not break any blisters that are present because this action increases the risk of infection. Do not apply cold compresses because their use may precipitate hypothermia.

Chemical Burns

For burns resulting from contact with a caustic substance, quickly remove all of the patient's clothing (including undergarments and socks) and jewelry—regardless of whether or not they appear contaminated—to ensure full removal of the chemical and to minimize tissue damage. In the process, use PPE to protect yourself, especially

Stop the Burn

- Stop the burning process.
- Remove clothing and jewelry near the affected area.

NOTE

Figure 19-16 Extinguish any burning or smoldering clothes before removing them.

