

Helping your child move and play

Why is it important to keep my child moving?

Movement and play is important for your child after a burn injury. Movement helps keep the skin as stretchy as possible. It also helps keep the skin from getting too tight. The occupational and physical therapists (OT/PT) may give you special exercises to help your child.

Here are other things you can do to help. Have your child do more on their own with:

- **Bathing.** Start by washing the normal skin and then go to the burn areas once they are healed and less tender.
- **Dressing.** Dress for comfort. Clothes that are loose with elastic at the waist will make it easier for your child. If your child's feet were burned use loose socks and wide shoes.
- **Brushing teeth and hair.** Have your child start this as soon as they can. This helps their hands, elbows and shoulders move.
- **Eating and opening up food packages.** This will make their hands stronger.

Help your child play using parts of their body as soon as possible.

- If the arms are burned have them reach over their head:
 - Put toys at different heights for them to grab.
 - Attach paper onto a wall or refrigerator to color.
 - Play ball throwing games with over head throwing.
- If the hands are burned have them play games that use their hands in different ways:
 - Play with knob puzzles. – String beads/cheerios.
 - Color or paint. – Peel and stick stickers.
- If the trunk is burned, dancing games are great:
 - Reach side to side. Sing "Put your right hand in..."
 - Reach to opposite sides. Sing "I'm a little teapot..."
 - Reach overhead and to the floor with both arms. Sing "Head, shoulders, knees and toes..."
- If the legs are burned have your child try to:
 - Walk, dance – Move in and out of a chair
 - Do standing play – Do knee and toe touches
 - Make ankle and leg circles

What if my child can't or won't do these things?

Talk to your doctor, nurse or therapist about this. They may have some other ideas to try. Your child has been through a lot and may be afraid to move, sad about the scars, in pain or may not move for other reasons. Encouraging movement and play is important for healing.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.