Most Kids in Loyola Burn Unit Arrive with Scalding Injuries
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8-Year-Old Suffers Second- and Third-Degree Burns after Hot Tea Spill

MAYWOOD, Ill. -- The Mleczko family had just settled down at the table of a local restaurant for brunch when Jeff heard his daughter Sydney scream.

“She was burned when a carafe of hot tea water spilled in her lap,” said the father of two daughters. Sydney’s mother quickly responded by dousing her with glasses of cold water while her father quickly pulled off his daughter’s clothing. “Her skin just peeled off in a layer with her clothes,” Jeff Mleczko said.

Sydney’s mom, Dori Mleczko, is a pediatric emergency department nurse and knew what to do.

“I grabbed Sydney and ran into the kitchen and over to the ice bin where I covered her with cubes,” she said. “The cooks tried to get me to rub her skin with butter, but I knew that cooling her down and saving her flesh from further burn was the top priority.”

“Time is tissue,” said Sydney’s doctor, Dr. Richard Gamelli, director of the Burn & Shock Trauma Institute at Loyola University Medical Center. “Even when the exterior skin is cooled, often the deeper flesh is still burning and causing damage.”

Hot liquid scalds are the No. 1 cause of burns to children. “Kids are underfoot in the kitchen, or curious about cooking, or sometimes, just in the wrong place at the wrong time,” said Jeanie Leggett, RN, manager of Loyola’s Burn Center.

The Loyola Burn Center is one of the busiest in the Midwest, treating nearly 700 patients annually in the hospital, and another 3,500 patients each year in its clinic. About 40 percent of these cases are children.

The Orland Park family drove Sydney to a local hospital and then an ambulance rushed her to Loyola where she was admitted to the Burn Center. “Within three hours of the burn in the restaurant, Sydney was at Loyola and being actively cared for by the Loyola nursing team,” Sydney’s mother said. “Loyola provides the very best care for burns, and I immediately felt confident when I knew Sydney would be treated there.”

The damaged skin was removed from the healthy tissue in a procedure called debridement.

“Her right and left legs, from her calves to her upper thighs sustained second- and third-degree burns,” Gamelli said. “After one week of care at Loyola, Sydney’s skin is growing healthy new buds and she is doing very well,” he said.

This was the third-grader’s first experience in a hospital.

“A child psychologist worked with Sydney to cope with the pain. The physical therapy team brought her a Wii to preoccupy her. She joined the pediatrics unit in arts and craft classes – I cannot say enough about the personal and professional care that Sydney has received at Loyola,” the young nurse and mother said. “I stayed overnight in the room with Sydney and my family spent the weekend at the Ronald McDonald® House on the neighboring Hines campus, and we felt so well-cared for by everyone.”
The Burn Center provides comprehensive care for adults and children with thermal injuries, electrical burns, chemical injuries, frostbite, toxic epidermal necrolysis, inhalation injuries and complex soft-tissue infections. A multidisciplinary team, which includes resuscitation, pulmonary support, wound management, nutritional support and rehabilitation personnel, provide care in the Burn Center. The Loyola Burn Center was awarded verification by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the American Burn Association (ABA). This recognition is only granted to those programs that have met and exceeded the ACS and ABA standards and review.