The Lasting Consequences And Complications Of Burn Injuries

Every year in the United States, approximately 450,000 people are seen in hospital emergency rooms for burn injuries. The American Burn Association states that someone dies every 2 hours and 41 minutes from a burn-related injury, with 3,275 deaths in 2014. While this translates to a high survival rate for these injuries (about 96 percent), burn injury victims are often left facing serious and lifelong physical, emotional, and financial consequences.

Common Causes of Burn Injuries

There are many causes of serious burn injuries. Burn injuries can occur very quickly but result in a severe amount of damage to tissues, nerves, skin, and more. Some of the most common causes of burn injuries include:

- Residential fires
- Car accidents
- Industrial fires
- Motorcycle accidents
- Truck accidents
- Defective vehicle fires
- Defective product fires

In some cases, multiple causes can occur together, like when a defective product sparks a fire inside a vehicle or home. Unless addressed immediately and appropriately, fires can spread very quickly and inflict a maximum amount of damage to property and people.

Types of Burn Injuries

As with most types of injuries, burn injuries can vary in type and severity. Some injuries can be treated at home or at a clinic, but other more serious burns must be addressed at a specialized burn center under the watchful care of trauma medical teams. Typically, burns are classified into one of three categories: first degree, second degree, and
third degree. First degree burns are the most superficial and affect only the outer layer of skin, while third degree burns are the most serious and can affect multiple body systems.

Burn injuries are also classified by the manner in which they were experienced. Common types of burns include:

- **Thermal** – Thermal burns are the most common type of burn. These burns are the result of flames, scalding, or contact with a heated object. Residential fires, boiling water, steam, hot coals, and hot metals are all common causes of thermal burns.

- **Chemical** – Chemical burns are caused when skin comes into contact with a chemical or caustic substance. These burns can be especially dangerous as they continue to damage the body until the chemical is neutralized.

- **Electrical** – Electrical burns are caused by contact with an electrical current. The danger in electrical burns is heightened because the current will travel the path of least resistance through the body, causing increasing damage and making it difficult to gage the extent of the injury from the outside.

- **Radiological** – Radiological burns are not as common and are caused by radiation. This type of burn injury may require decontamination to stop the injury from progressing.

**Burn Injuries Have Severe and Lasting Consequences for Victims**

When it comes to burn injuries, the consequences for the accident victims can be extremely severe. Burn injuries often cause a number of serious health issues, both cosmetic and medical, that will affect victims for the rest of their lives. Some of the possible lasting complications of burn injuries include:

- **Disfigurement and scarring.** Scar tissue can leave the skin uneven or discolored permanently.

- **Infection.** Burned skin is much more vulnerable to infection, which can in turn lead to sepsis. Sepsis is a life-threatening condition that escalates quickly and can affect multiple body systems.

- **Low body temperature.** After a burn injury, it can be difficult for the body to regulate temperature. The skin plays a large role in maintaining the proper temperature, and damaged tissue can leave victims vulnerable to hypothermia.

- **Respiratory problems.** Breathing problems can occur after a burn injury from both breathing in smoke during a fire and from scarring around the chest that can directly result of burns.

- **Bone and joint problems.** Scar tissue can form at the site of deep burns. This can cause the limbs and joints to become stiff and limit movement. In severe cases, the joints can be permanently pulled out of place.

Many of these burn injuries and complications not only inflict a great deal of pain on the victim, but they require months and even years of medical treatment, surgery, rehabilitation, and monitoring to appropriately manage.

**Emotional and Financial Consequences Can Be Just as Serious**

For burn victims, moving forward with life after an accident and injury can be incredibly difficult. Many victims struggle with the scarring and disfigurement left by the burns, in addition to limited mobility and an inability to enjoy the same type of lifestyle as before. This can lead to sadness and frustration, even depression.
Additionally, the need for continuing and specialized medical care, coupled with an inability to work, can leave victims facing serious financial strain. One study states that even though fire and burn injuries account for only one percent of all U.S. injuries, the treatments for these injuries costs upwards of $10 billion a year.

If you or someone you love has suffered a burn injury as the result of someone else’s carelessness, you do not have to bear these burdens alone. Delaware law allows accident victims to pursue justice and compensation for their injuries. At the Morris James Personal Injury Group, our experienced serious injury lawyers may be able to help. Call our office nearest you today to learn more about your rights and legal options after a burn injury.

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