

Teen bonfires can cause serious injuries, burn surgeon warns

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Building a bonfire has become a popular activity among teenagers, but a big fire can result in serious burn injuries, cautions Loyola Medicine burn surgeon Arthur Sanford, MD.

"The only guaranteed way to prevent bonfire [burn injuries](#) is to not have a fire in the first place," Dr. Sanford said. "But if you do decide to have a fire for a prom, graduation or other occasion, there are simple ways to minimize the risk of burns."

Dr. Sanford recommends the following safety tips:

- Check the weather. If [high winds](#) are forecast, cancel the bonfire.
- Make a [fire pit](#) and clear all brush from the area
- Keep a bucket of water and garden hose nearby
- The safest way to start a fire is with newspapers and small kindling. If you have to use charcoal lighter fluid, make sure to seal the container and keep it well away from the fire. Never use lighter fluid once the fire has started
- Never use an accelerant such as gasoline, diesel fuel or kerosene.
- Do not spray aerosols or toss canisters or fireworks into the fire
- Limit the bonfire to a manageable size – no more than about four feet by four feet.
- Keep a safe distance from the fire, and don't horse around
- Do not drink alcohol
- Make sure to put the [fire](#) out completely – stir the ashes and douse thoroughly with water. (Loyola's burn center has treated multiple patients who suffered burns after inadvertently walking on ashes.)

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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