

Escharotomy Guidelines

New Zealand National Burn Service



AIM

- To release rigid and inelastic burnt skin (eschar) to allow
 - circulation (in a limb)
 - breathing (when chest involved)
- BEFORE problems arise OR to treat an existing problem

INDICATIONS

- Distribution of burn injury (eg circumferential or near circumferential)
- Amount of predicted or actual swelling (oedema, fluid resuscitation)
- Inelastic burn skin (does not have to be full-thickness)

ENVIRONMENT / EQUIPMENT

- Diathermy (or scalpel), skin prep, drapes and crepe bandages
- Burn Escharotomy & Burn Dressing Packs (contains Algisite, Bactigras and Melonin)
- Ideally performed in theatre under GA with diathermy
 - can be done in ED / resus with LA
 - can be done with scalpel but will need diathermy to control bleeding

PROCEDURE

- ENSURE limb is in anatomical position (forearm supinated NOT pronated)
- Prep wound with chlorhexidine or non-alcoholic betadine skin prep
- Drape area
- Cut with either diathermy or scalpel along lines (see diagram other side)

Limbs – release both medial and lateral sides

Chest – release entire breast plate

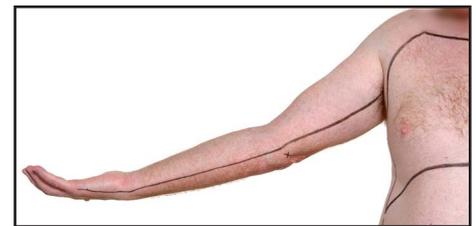
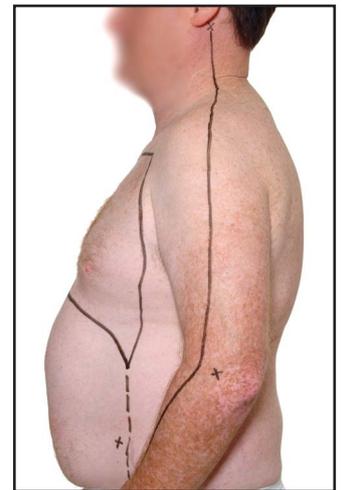
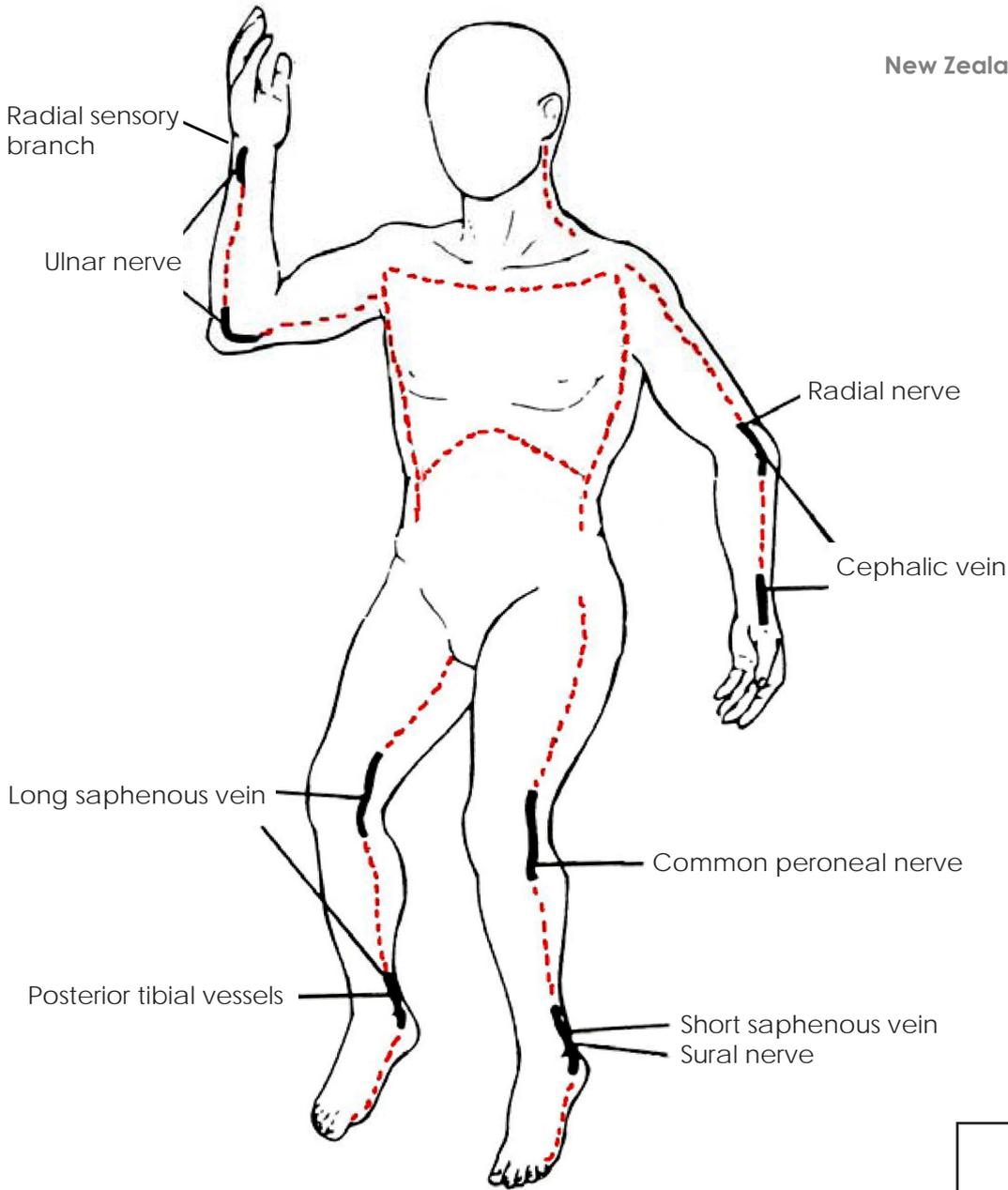
CAUTION: Identify and avoid important structures (see diagram other side)

- Ensure incision is SKIN DEPTH ONLY
 - see fat not muscle at base of wound
- Ensure adequacy of release
 - no remaining tight bands – run finger along wound
 - escharotomy extends above & below burn into unburnt skin (where possible)
 - monitor for return or preservation of circulation (limb), breathing (chest)
- Dress with
 - Algisite (in escharotomy wound)
 - Bactigras (over rest of burn wound but NOT CIRCUMFERENTIAL)
 - Loose Melonin & Crepe as outer dressing

POST ESCHAROTOMY CARE

- Continue MONITORING
 - circulation (in a limb)
 - breathing and ventilatory pressure (when chest involved)
- Elevate Limbs
- Continue Burn Care

Please contact your local Regional Burn Unit for further advice!



- Cut along the dotted line, identifying and avoiding named structures
- Release both sides of limbs and all of chest

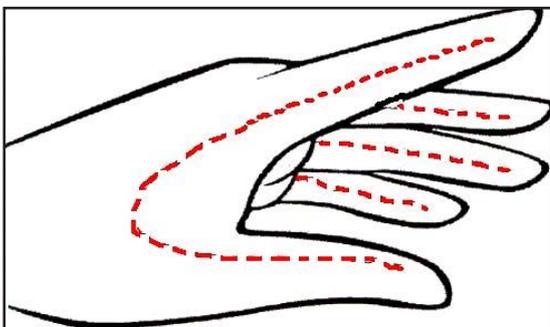


Diagram modified by National Burn Service