



## A silver lining for sibling burn patients

What started as a quiet spring evening at home suddenly changed when Alyssa heard screams from the kitchen. She and her brother Doug went running to find a growing grease fire on the stove.

Doug grabbed the flaming pan off the stove and threw it onto the floor. Seconds later, he stifled the flames with baking soda. Unfortunately, those few moments were enough for Alyssa's pant leg to catch on fire.

By the time emergency services arrived all the flames were out, but the majority of Alyssa's leg was badly burned, as were Doug's hands and forearms. Both were taken to the local hospital for emergency treatment, but the severity of the burns required them to be transferred to [Hamilton General](#)

[Hospital \(HGH\).](#)



Once I got to the hospital I don't remember much. I know now that I was in far worse condition than I realized, says Alyssa. I do remember the comfort of being with my brother while we were transferred to Hamilton.

When the two arrived on the unit they requested to share a room, and we were happy to accommodate, says Lori Schoonderbeek, charge nurse on HGH's [Burn Trauma Unit](#). It's a painful injury, so we knew it would be a great benefit for them to have each other's support.

Once settled, both Alyssa and Doug received regular burn care to see if their injuries would heal on their own. However, the damage to their skin was too extensive and both siblings needed [skin grafting](#) surgery.



After a few days of bedrest to allow the new skin to heal, they were cleared for physiotherapy to regain mobility. Regular stretching is required, otherwise the skin will tighten. That can limit range of motion, which for Alyssa, would mean difficulty walking. She was determined to recover fully so she could walk down the aisle for her August wedding.

I had to re-learn to walk and Doug had to re-learn to use his hands. So, he'd help me go for walks around the unit and I'd help him get dressed and eat, says Alyssa.

You'd be surprised how simple tasks are difficult when recovering from burns, says Lori. Alyssa and Doug had a great recovery though, which I believe is because they had each other.

Alyssa's determination sped her healing and she was discharged



As a nurse we see these patients when they're at their worst and help them heal, says Lori. We rarely get to see our patients when they're at their best. That's why it's so rewarding to see them at the holiday party doing so well, Alyssa included.

There were lots of smiles and hugs. Despite all these patients have been through this year, the party helps them kick off the holiday season on a positive note.