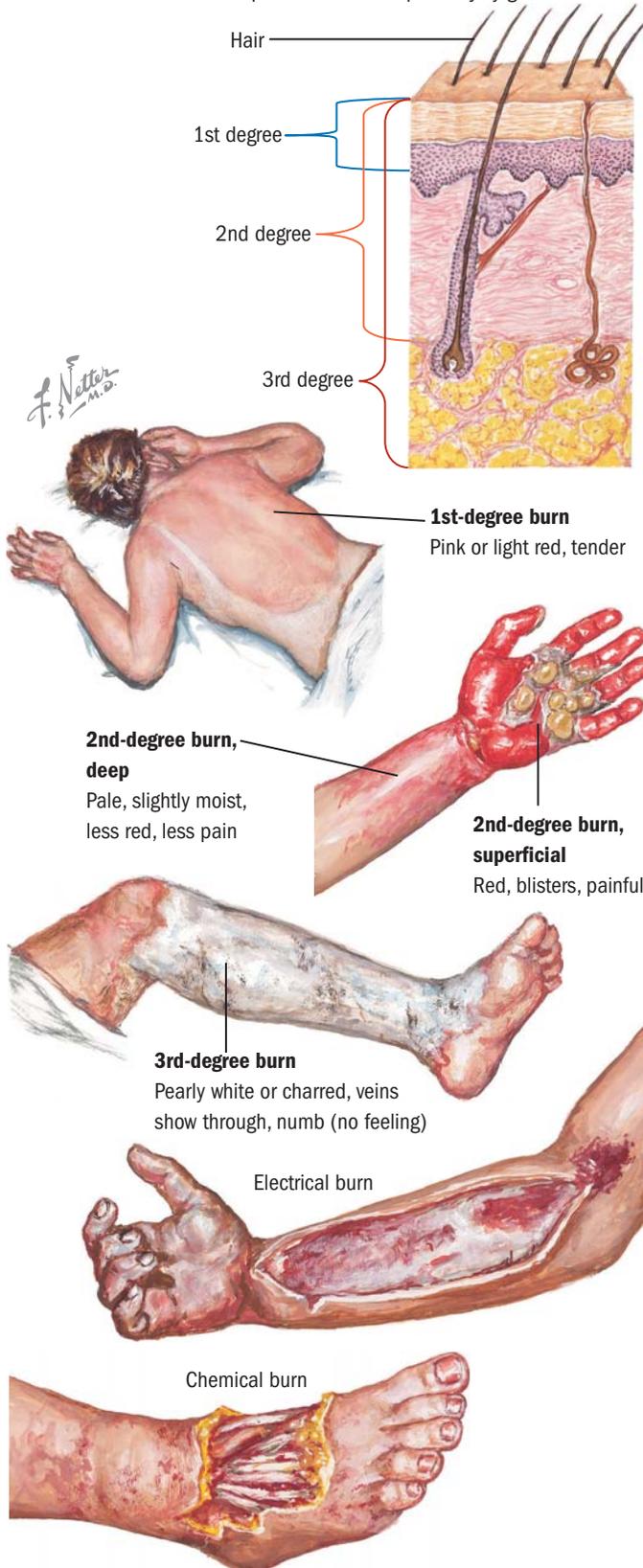


MANAGING YOUR BURNS

The seriousness of a burn depends on how deep the injury goes.



What Are Burns?

Thermal burns are injuries to the skin (and deeper structures) caused by too much heat or certain types of light. Intense heat for a short time (e.g., hot grease) and low heat or light over long times (e.g., heating pads or sun) produce burns. The depth of tissue injury determines burn severity. Thermal burns are usually classified as first, second, and third degree. Fourth-degree burns extend into the muscle below the skin. Electricity and chemicals such as acids and alkali may also cause burns. Chemical burns are more complicated and hard to classify. Electrical burns may be deep enough to reach muscles and bones and are sometimes called fourth-degree (black or char) burns.

What Causes Burns?

Burns can be caused by fire, steam, electricity, sun, chemicals, and hot liquids or objects.

What Are the Symptoms of Burns?

Symptoms vary with the degree of damage to body tissues. First-degree burns produce painful, red areas in the surface (superficial) skin, but no blisters. Second-degree burns affect deeper skin, with blisters and light charring, and are very painful. Third-degree burns damage the whole skin depth, so the skin looks pale, charred, and leathery. These burns aren't painful because the nerves in the burned area have been damaged.

How Are Burns Diagnosed?

The diagnosis is made by examining the skin. Symptoms will help determine the degree of burn.

How Are Burns Treated?

Small first-degree burns may not require any treatment. Putting the burned area in cold water (not ice) or using wet compresses can reduce pain and swelling of minor burns. Breaking blisters can cause infection, so this should be avoided. Using aloe vera and acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help pain. Protection with dressings and antibiotic ointment may prevent infection.

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Treatment for first-degree burns includes putting the burned area in cold water or using wet compresses (not ice directly on the burn), using aloe vera and taking medicine for pain.



Your doctor should see second-degree burns larger than the size of your palm. All third-degree burns and worse need a doctor's immediate care. Call 911 for emergency help.

Drink plenty of fluids, because burns cause you to lose water. Extensive and severe burns may require fluids given intravenously.



Avoid sun on your burns while healing—it increases scarring. Do not put butter on burns.

Practice fire safety: wear protection, fireproof your home and business, and teach children safety rules.



Medical evaluation and treatment is needed for: (1) second-degree burns larger than the person's palm; (2) any second-degree burns of hands, feet, face, or genitals; and (3) second-degree burns anywhere on infants. All third- and fourth-degree burns (which are life-threatening) need a doctor's immediate care. A doctor should always see chemical burns.

The doctor will gently remove dead skin layers (débridement), change dressings, and watch for infections. Some severe burns need specialized treatment, including surgical grafting of skin and use of special pressure garments, at special centers.

For severe burns, call 911 for help.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Burns:

- ✓ **DO** change your dressing and apply fresh antibiotic ointment at prescribed times.
- ✓ **DO** use pain medicines as directed.
- ✓ **DO** drink extra fluids and eat a healthy diet.
- ✓ **DO** keep follow-up doctor appointments.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have fever; chills; increasing pain; or pus, foul odor, or red streaking from your wound.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have a reaction to medicine.
- ✓ **DO** practice fire safety: wear protection, fireproof your home and business, and teach children safety rules.
- ⊗ **DON'T** ignore second-degree burns.
- ⊗ **DON'T** put butter on burns.
- ⊗ **DON'T** let bandages become dirty or wet.
- ⊗ **DON'T** exercise or return to work until your doctor says to.
- ⊗ **DON'T** expose healing burns to sunlight (increases scarring).
- ⊗ **DON'T** try to peel dead skin layers.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

• Burn Survivor Resource Center

Tel: (800) 669-7700

Website: <http://burnsurvivor.com/survivorlinks.html>

• American Burn Association

Website: <http://www.ameriburn.org>

• American College of Emergency Physicians

Website: <http://www.acep.org>