



Education

First Aid for First-Degree Burns

What is a first-degree burn?

A first-degree burn, the least serious type of burn, is one in which the top layer of skin has been burned slightly. These burns produce pain and redness of the skin.

What causes a first-degree burn?

First-degree burns are usually caused by:

- overexposure to the sun
- brief contact with a hot object, such as an iron or skillet
- minor scalding by hot water or steam
- brief contact with harsh chemicals, such as tile cleaners, car battery acid, drain cleaners, gasoline, wet or dry cement, lime, and chlorine.

What are the symptoms?

First-degree burns cause:

- redness
- mild swelling (with few or no blisters)
- pain.

Some first-degree burns, such as extensive sunburns, also cause restlessness, headaches, and fever.

How is it treated?

For a burn caused by heat, follow these steps:

- Remove jewelry or tight clothing from the burned area before the skin begins to swell.
- Flush the burn with cool running water or apply cold moist cloths until the pain lessens. Do not use ice or ice water, which can cause more damage to the skin.
- Use an antiseptic spray to help relieve pain and prevent infection or use an aloe cream to soothe the skin. Do not put ointments, grease, petroleum jelly, butter, or home remedies on the burn. They can keep the burn from healing and may cause infection.
- Cover the burn with a clean (sterile, if possible), dry, nonfluffy bandage such as a gauze pad. Do not put tape on the burn.

For first aid treatment of **chemical burns**, follow these steps, avoiding contact with the chemical:

- Remove right away any clothing or jewelry on which the chemical has spilled.
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- Flush **liquid chemicals** from the skin thoroughly with cool running water for 20 minutes. Be sure to avoid splashing the chemical in your eyes. After flushing, call the Poison Control Center for further advice. It helps to have the chemical container with you when you make the call.
- Brush **dry chemicals** off the skin if large amounts of water are not available. Small amounts of water will activate some chemicals, such as lime, and cause more damage. Be careful not to get any of the chemicals in your eyes.
- Do not try to neutralize a chemical. For example, putting an alkali chemical onto skin that has been exposed to an acid will often produce a large amount of heat and may increase the burning.
- Do not put any burn medication on skin burned by a chemical. Salves, grease, or butter may keep the chemical on the burned area, increasing exposure to the chemical.
- Do not put a bandage on the burn until you are told to do so by a health care provider.
- Seek emergency medical help if a chemical burn is on the face, feet, hands, groin, buttocks, or over a major joint.

For all burns:

- Take aspirin or ibuprofen to relieve pain and inflammation, or take acetaminophen to relieve pain.
- Get medical treatment if a burn covers more than a couple of inches.
- Call or see your health care provider if you develop any of the following symptoms:
 - fever over 100°F (37.8°C)
 - puslike drainage from the burned area
 - blistering
 - excessive swelling of the burned area
 - increased redness of the skin.

How long will the effects last?

Usually, first-degree burns heal quickly in 2 to 5 days. The damaged skin may peel within a day or two. You will usually not have any scarring unless the injury gets infected.

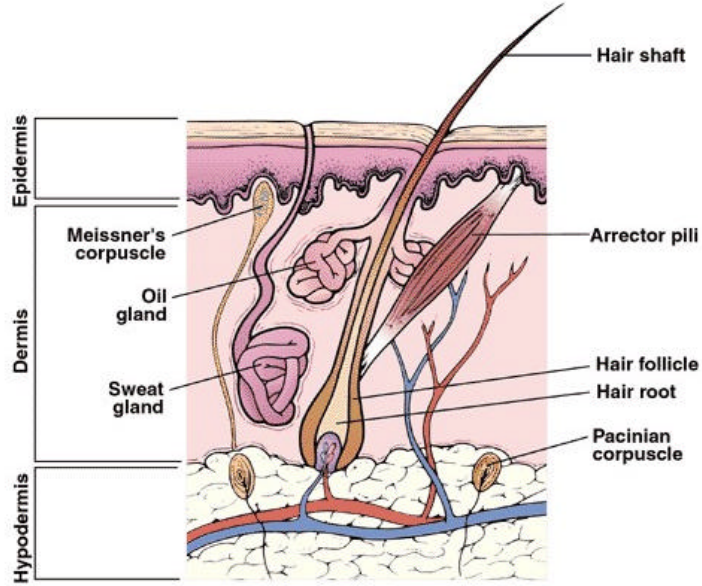
How can I help prevent burns?

Some examples of things you can do to help prevent burns are:

- Turn your water heater setting down to 120°F (48.8°C).
- Keep pot handles turned away from the stove front.
- Always wear sunscreen when outdoors.

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Skin: Cross Section



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