Burns: How to treat and prevent

Stay safe when using fires or hot liquids

Ouch! I burned my skin, now what?

First Degree

- Put the affected area in cool water or apply a cold, wet compress
- Apply petroleum jelly a few times each day
- Consider taking over-the-counter pain medicine like acetaminophen or ibuprofen to ease pain
- Protect the affected area from the sun

Second Degree

- Follow all first degree burn treatment recommendations
- Don’t break any blisters
- Apply a bandage if the skin or blisters are likely to become irritated by clothing or daily activity, or if the blisters have broken open

Third Degree

- Seek immediate medical attention
- While waiting for medical help to arrive, cover the affected area in a clean bandage and attempt to raise the affected area above the heart

How to avoid betting burned

It’s likely you’ll experience a burn at some point. Accidents happen! However, there are some steps you can take to reduce the risk of injuring you or those around you.

- Keep hot foods and beverages away from table edges
- Don’t leave hot beverages or cooking pots and pans unattended around children or pets
- If using a travel mug be sure to use a spill-proof lid
- Don’t overfill cups or bowls
- Warn others when a hot liquid or dish is being served
- Use oven mitts when cooking or handling hot food and drinks
- Warn others when household appliances such as a stove or iron may be hot

Getting warm gone wrong: How bad is my burn?

First Degree

**What it means:** Only the top layer of skin is affected
**What it looks like:** The top layer of skin is red and painful
**What might have caused it:** Splashing a cup of hot tea

Second Degree

**What it means:** The first and second layers of the skin are affected
**What it looks like:** Skin looks wet or moist and blisters may form
**What might have caused it:** Making contact with a hot stove burner

Third Degree

**What it means:** All three layers of skin are affected
**What it looks like:** Skin is black, white, or red with a leathery appearance
**What might have caused it:** Being caught in a fire

**Source:** National Institute of General Medical Sciences