

SECOND DEGREE BURN CARE

What Is A Second Degree Burn?

A second-degree burn is a mild to moderate burn, and it's the most common type.

A burn is tissue damage caused by a heat, chemical or light source. A second-degree burn damages the outer layer of your skin (epidermis) and the second layer of your skin (dermis). It's less severe than a third-degree burn. You can treat most second-degree burns at home.

What does a second-degree burn look like?

There are three main degrees of burns. A first-degree burn may only cause skin discoloration. A second-degree burn includes blisters, a darker tone and a shiny, moist appearance. A third-degree burn may cause the skin to turn black and dry out. You can have symptoms of several types of burns in the same place.

Features of a second-degree burn include:

- Skin discoloration: deep red to dark brown.
- Blisters.
- Shiny, moist skin.
- Pain or discomfort.
- Swelling.
- Layers of skin peeling away.

How do you treat a second-degree burn?

- First use cool water to gently wash your burn. Try to keep your burn area under water for at least five minutes, up to 30 minutes. Gently pat the burn dry with a clean towel.
- Cover your burn with a clean bandage or wound dressing like non-stick gauze.
- Avoid touching your burn or placing clothing on your skin that can cause friction or rub against your wound.
- Take over-the-counter pain relievers (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) as recommended by your provider if you experience pain.
- Change your bandage at least once daily after cleaning the wound with soapy water. Apply antibiotic ointment generously to the wounds and cover with gauze.

Large wounds may require debridement in the office or in the operative room. Large wounds might also require prophylactic antibiotic to prevent infection.

If you have any signs of infection (pus, redness, fever, foul odor) call the office to be seen by Dr Szpalski. You might need an antibiotic prescription.

Should I let my second-degree burn air out?

You should keep your burn covered for the first week after the event as you let your skin heal. Depending on the evolution of the wound, you might need to keep the dressings on longer.

Will my skin scar after a second-degree burn?

Scarring is possible with second-degree burns. Not everyone will get a scar after a burn, and scars are more likely if you have a large, more serious burn. Your skin may appear lighter or darker than your natural skin tone after a burn. This is usually a long-term change to your skin tone that may fade over time.

Scar care instructions will be shared with you once your wound will be ready for scar treatment.

How long will it take for my second-degree burn to heal?

On average, it can take one week to three weeks for your skin to heal after a second-degree burn. This timeframe can vary based on the size and location of your burn.

If my hand or my feet is burned, can I use the affected extremity?

We usually recommend mobilizing your joints and the use of your extremities to avoid poor scarring and joint movement restriction. The only exception is if you needed to get reconstruction of the wound and a skin graft or flap was needed. It is usually not the case for second degree burns.