

# Burn Discharge Information

## What is a burn?

A burn is damage to body tissues caused by sunlight, heat, fire, electricity, friction, radiation, chemicals, hot water or steam. Burns are described by the damage they cause. A mild burn that affects only the top layer of skin, causing redness, is called a first-degree burn or superficial burn. A burn that is red with blisters and affects the top layer of skin and supporting tissues is called a second-degree or partial thickness burn. More severe burns that affect all layers of skin and supporting tissues, causing a white color or black charring, are called third-degree or full thickness burns. Full thickness burns that also affect the fat, muscle, and bone under the skin may be called fourth-degree burns. Even burns that are not as deep may be considered severe if they cover a large area of your body. A person who is burned may also have damage to the eyes (ocular burn) with facial burns or to the airway (inhalation burn) from breathing in hot air, steam, smoke, or chemicals.

## How can I take care of myself when I go home?

How long it takes to get better depends on how severe your burn is, the part of your body affected, your treatment, how well you recover, your overall health, and any complications you may have.

### Management

- Your provider will give you a list of your medicines when you leave the hospital.
  - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
  - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
  - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include any nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
  - Treat pain
  - Treat or prevent an infection
  - Replace or supplement nutrients, hormones, or other chemicals that your body may need to recover from the burn
  - Help relax and reduce swelling in your airways if they were damaged by the burn
- You may need physical or occupational therapy to help prevent complications and improve your recovery. Most rehabilitation programs include:
  - Physical therapy to help prevent scars and muscle contractures and regain muscle strength
  - Occupational therapy to help you relearn ways to do the tasks that you did before the burn

- To care for your burn wound:
  - Keep your wound and incision clean.
  - If you are told to change your dressing, wash your hands before changing the dressing and after disposing of the dressing.

### **Appointments**

- Follow your provider's instructions for follow-up appointments and routine tests.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

### **Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes**

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- Get plenty of rest while you're recovering. Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Eat a healthy diet. You may need to make changes in some of the foods you eat. Ask your provider about the benefits of talking to a dietician to learn what you need in a healthy diet.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.
- Exercise as your provider recommends.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can cause poor blood circulation and reduce healing.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines.

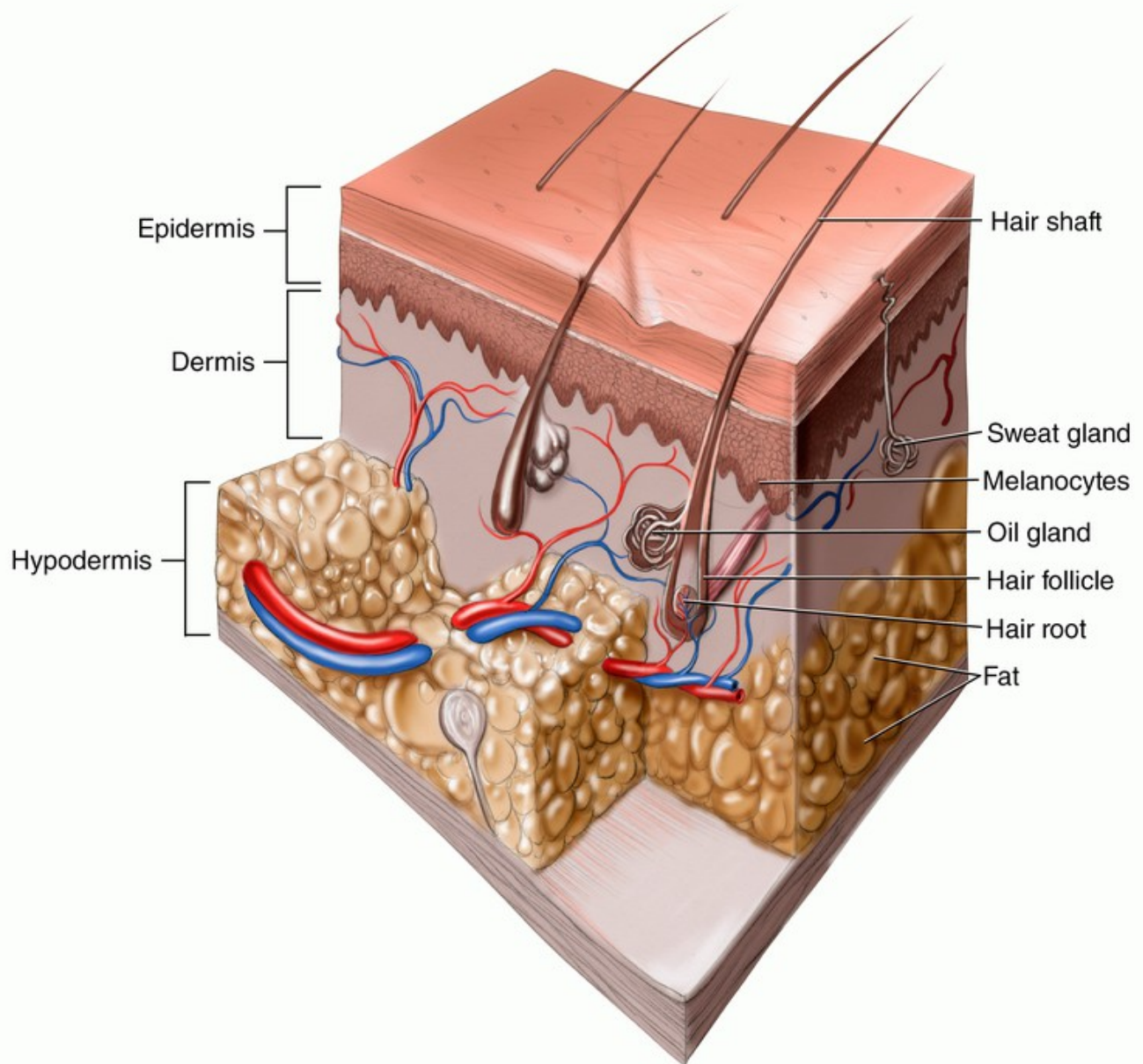
### **Call your healthcare provider if you have new or worsening:**

- Bluish color of your skin below the level of the burn
- Numbness in your feet or hands below the level of the burn
- Increased pain at the site of the burn
- Increased drainage from the burned area
- Signs of infection around your burn wound or surgery site. These include:
  - The area is more red or painful.
  - Your wound area is very warm to touch.
  - You have blood, pus, or other fluid coming from the wound area.
  - You have a fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C).
  - You have chills or muscle aches.
- Depression

Developed by RelayHealth.

*This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.*

# Skin: Cross Section



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