



How to Treat a Burn Using Honey

Expert
Reviewed

Four Parts: [Diagnosing Your Burn](#) [Treating Smaller Burns Immediately](#) [Changing the Dressing](#) [Letting the Burn Heal](#)

Medicinal honey is a bit different from the processed, food grade honey you will find on most store shelves, so you should ensure that you have a ready source of *medical grade Manuka honey* available before you proceed with the burn treatment recommended in this article.

Honey has been used for hundreds of years to treat burns and other injuries. Honey's antioxidant and antibacterial properties give it healing qualities.^[1] When honey is applied to a burn, it keeps the wound moist, allowing for quick healing and minimal scarring. Use honey to treat first-degree burns and small second-degree burns rapidly and naturally.^[2]

Part
1

Diagnosing Your Burn

1 Recognize a first-degree burn. Burns can happen pretty easily. You can get burned by heat, fire, the sun, electricity, boiling liquids like water, sauces and other foods, and chemicals. A first-degree burn is the least severe, affecting the topmost layers of your skin.^[2]

- A first-degree burn will be red and painful. It turns white when you put pressure on it.
- This type of burn usually heals within 3-6 days. The skin may peel during healing. There is usually little to no scarring.

2 Recognize a second-degree burn. A second-degree burn is more severe than a first-degree burn. It affects deeper layers of the skin. It will be red or splotchy, swollen and very painful. There may be blisters. ^[3]

- This type of burn usually heals within 2-3 weeks. You may have some scarring.
- If your burn is any larger than about 1 inch (2.5 centimeters), see your doctor immediately.

3 Know what a third-degree burn is like. Third-degree burns are the deepest and most serious burns. They damage all the layers of the skin. The skin may be whitish (charred) or black. ^[4]

- Third-degree burns require **immediate medical attention**. Do not attempt to treat this type of burn on your own.
- Third-degree burns are not usually painful because the nerves have been damaged.
- These burns may take months to heal and may scar during healing.

Part
2

Treating Smaller Burns Immediately

1 Run cold water over the burn. Immediately after getting burned, use cold, running water to cool the area to a comfortable level. Do this for at least 5 minutes. ^[5]

- Second-degree burns should be cooled for at least 15 minutes.^[6]
- Do not apply ice to the burned area.

2 Pour medicinal honey over the burned area. Use medicinal honey to cover the entire burned area and onto the surrounding, undamaged tissue. Don't skimp on the honey. You want to have a pretty thick layer of honey over the wound. Depending on where the burn is, try to have the honey about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick (about $\frac{1}{2}$ centimeter).

- Use medicinal honey if possible. Examples of medicinal honeys are manuka honey from New Zealand and Medihoney from Germany.^[7]
- If you can't find medicinal honey, a good choice is organic, unfiltered raw honey. Don't use regular honey from

the grocery store.^[8]

- Avoid using rhododendron-based honey. It can contain toxins known as grayanotoxins and is known as "Mad Honey" because it has been known to cause lightheadedness and hallucinations. ^[9]

3 Spread the honey around. Use a thin plastic bag, sandwich bag or wooden ice cream stick to gently spread the honey over the burned area and surrounding skin.

4 Wrap the burned area with dressing. Use a clean, dry gauze bandage or a non-stick dressing like Telfa. Cover the burned area completely with the dressing. Hold it in place with medical adhesive tape.^[10]

5 Get immediate medical attention for major burns. If you have received a large second-degree burn (larger than 1 inch or 2.5 centimeters), or you have a third-degree burn, get medical attention right away.

- For second-degree burns, you should still cool the burn with cold, running water for 15 minutes, or until help arrives.

6 Get immediate medical attention for electrical, chemical and radiation burns. All electrical, chemical and radiation burns (with the exception of mild sunburn) should be treated by medical professionals as soon as possible.

- A chemical burn should be flushed with cool, running water for at least 5 minutes. Get medical attention immediately.

Part
3

Changing the Dressing

1 Wash your hands. Make sure you have clean hands before changing the dressing on your burn. If your hand is burned, ask someone to help you. Have them wash their hands with soap and water first.

2 Gently remove the dressing. If any loose skin sticks to the dressing, let it pull away from the burned area.^[11] Studies have shown that honey helps loosen and separate skin more easily and without pain, so this should be relatively easy to do.^[12]

- Throw away the old dressing.

3 Check for infection. Examine the burn area and look for signs of infection. This might include:

- Pus or discharge
- Swellings filled with anything but clear fluid (if the skin has blistered, leave the blister intact)
- Reddish streaks which radiate from the injury
- Fever

4 Apply antibiotic ointment if you want to. If you think you have an infection but it seems minor, you can use a triple-antibiotic cream/ointment on it, though the honey generally prevents infections.

- If you think you may have a more serious infection (for example, you are running a fever or you see red streaks), contact your healthcare professional immediately.

5 Do not remove tissue from the burn. Removing tissue (loose skin) from the burned area can cause further damage such as scarring. There is no need to remove tissue that remains on the burned area after you've removed the dressing. Let your body do the work. The tissue will fall off normally, and the honey will speed up this process.

6 Don't wash off any honey. The honey has antimicrobial and antibacterial properties. It can prevent infections most of the time.^[13] The honey forms a protective barrier over the area, and removing it will expose the

vulnerable tissue. Leave the honey on the injured area.

- 7 **Add more honey to the burned area.** Use as much honey as is needed to cover over the burn area. Use enough to make a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick layer (about $\frac{1}{2}$ centimeter).
- 8 **Apply a fresh dressing.** Use gauze or Telfa to cover the burned area completely. Secure with medical adhesive tape.

Part
4

Letting the Burn Heal

- 1 **Change the dressing daily.** Keep changing the dressing and applying more honey every day. Watch for the wound to look pinkish and bumpy.
- 2 **Give your burn some air.** Every day, leave the dressing off for 1-2 hours. This will allow the injured area to get some air. Then, reapply honey and a fresh dressing of gauze or Telfa.
- 3 **Wash off the honey.** A first-degree burn should heal within a week. A small second-degree burn should heal within 2 weeks. Once the burn is healed, wash off the honey with cool running water.
 - If a burn is taking longer than 2 weeks to heal, see your doctor to have the burn checked.

Community Q&A

Do these steps work with a superficial second degree burn?

By definition, a 2nd degree burn is MORE than superficial-- the burn goes deeper than a 1st degree burn. But, to answer your question, if the 2nd degree burn has been seen by a physician and is a small area, then yes, you can use the methods listed here to help the burn heal.

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Chat with this expert

I burned myself about 2 months back, but it still itches. What can I do?

You don't mention what degree of burn it is-- but if it was a large second or third degree burn, go see your doctor to make sure it healed properly. You can also try to moisturize the area that was burned-- dry skin can be itchy skin and the burn injury may have caused the dryness.

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Chat with this expert

How does honey help burns?

It is soothing, antiseptic and healing. However, don't depend on honey from the supermarket or health food store to treat your next burn. Instead, try one of the medicinal honeys -- manuka honey, for example, is available commercially.

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I burned myself with hot water and the doctor gave me dressing with "Silverane." Will this be effective?

That is probably the same as Silvadene -- and yes, that is the best treatment. I used it on my husband's third degree burn with success. He has no scar tissue and it took weeks and weeks to heal. Silvadene also seems to numb the pain somehow.

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Tips

- If you pick up something hot between your fingers, immediately grab your ear lobe. The heat will be quickly drawn from the burn and to the ear lobe. The fingers have a large number of nerve endings while the ear lobe has fewer nerve endings

and has a relatively large surface area. The large surface area can dissipate the heat faster.

Warnings

- Don't try to remove any burnt clothing or any materials from a second or third degree burn. This may cause more damage to your burn.
- Don't use anything but water to cool a burn.
- Don't apply butter, oil or ice to any burn.

Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3188068/>
2. <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/staying-healthy/first-aid/first-aid-burns.html>
3. <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/staying-healthy/first-aid/first-aid-burns.html>

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