

Depth of Burns Diagram

The diagram includes 5 illustrated sections of tissue, each showing a progressively severe burn and its effect on the epidermis, dermis, adipose tissue, and muscle.

Superficial thickness (first degree)

- The surface of the epidermis shows redness. The other tissue layers are not affected.
- Characteristics of a superficial burn are painful, does not blister, and does not scar.

Partial or intermediate thickness (second degree)

Two tissue sections are shown.

- The first section shows blistering on the surface of the epidermis and redness throughout the epidermis. Superficial partial-thickness burns do not require surgery but may scar and be more painful.
- The second section shows more severe blistering on the surface of the epidermis and redness through the epidermis and about halfway through the dermis. Deep partial-thickness burns require surgery, form more scars, and are less painful.
- Characteristics of partial-thickness burns are blistering and weeping, increased risk of infection with increasing depth, and increased risk of scarring with increasing depth.

Full thickness (third degree)

- The surface of the epidermis is destroyed. The rest of the epidermis and most of the dermis show damage.
- Characteristics of a full-thickness burn are dry, insensate to light touch and pin prick, that small areas will heal with substantial scar or contracture, that large areas require skin grafting, and high risk of infection.

Fourth degree

- The epidermis, dermis, adipose tissue, and muscle are destroyed down to the bone.
- Characteristics of a fourth-degree burn involves muscle or bone and leads to loss of the burned body part.