

CLASSIFICATION OF BURNS (1700)

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In order to make the correct management and triage decisions, burns must be classified in terms of: 1) depth, 2) percentage of body surface involved, 3) presence of complications.

DEGREE SYSTEM

The depth of burns can be estimated as follows:

FIRST DEGREE BURNS: are recognized by areas of erythema which blanch on pressure. There is pain and edema but normally no blisters. This type of superficial burn, such as is seen with sunburns, heals within a week, causes minimal systemic derangement, and should not be included in the estimate of burn surface area when making triage decisions.

SECOND DEGREE BURNS: in the acute stage are characteristically red and painful with blisters and subcutaneous edema. After several days they may become white and difficult to differentiate from third degree burns.

THIRD DEGREE BURNS: Characteristically waxy white, leathery and unblistered. Usually anesthetic to pin prick, depressed slightly below the surface of the surrounding burn and associated with subcutaneous edema. Very deep burns may appear charred or black.