

Health

## Burn Victim Covered With Fish Skin for Pioneering New Treatment

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Maria Ines Candido da Silva's burn wounds were treated with the skin from tilapia fish. (Photo: Caters News)

A woman in Brazil who suffered severe burns was treated with fish skin to help her own skin heal — and she's part of a niche, but growing body of research.

Maria Ines Candido da Silva, 36, suffered burns to her arms, neck, and some of her face, after a gas canister at the restaurant where she worked exploded. In October, doctors offered her the chance to be part of a study of a pioneering treatment that uses skin from tilapia, a freshwater fish, to dress her wounds.

"I was in absolute agony and desperate for anything to ease my suffering," da Silva told *the Sun*. Doctors in Brazil have completed tilapia skin trials on 50 burn victims this month, including da Silva, the Sun reports.



For the treatment, doctors take skin from tilapia, which is a disease-resistant species, and put it through a process that removes the scales, muscle, toxins, and fishy smell. The fish skin is then stretched, laminated, and stored in refrigerators in strips for up to two years.

The resulting strips are similar to human skin, making it flexible and easy to mold around a patient's wound, the Sun says. Tilapia skin was left on da Silva's burns for 11 days before being removed with petroleum jelly.



Edmar Maciel, one of the plastic surgeons who came up with the treatment, tells *the Sun* that tilapia skin contains optimum levels of collagen and high degrees of humidity, so it takes a long time to dry out — both of which are important factors in healing burns. Maciel said that the tilapia skin “performs significantly better in the healing process by soothing and curing severe wounds caused by burns.”

Da Silva says she’s nearly back to normal after her treatment. “I loved the treatment and would recommend it to anyone who has suffered like me,” she said. But ... fish skin to heal burns? Some experts expressed caution.



Dermatologist Cynthia Bailey, M.D., founder of Dr. Bailey Skin Care, tells Yahoo Beauty that the treatment is resourceful and interesting, but risky. “Infection is my biggest concern,” she says. However, she notes, researchers seem to put the skin through a rigorous cleansing process before it treats burn victims. “The thoroughness of this preparation is really important,” she says.