



Beauty | June 22, 2017 | By Korin Miller

# This Man's Second-Degree Sunburn Will Make You Reach for the SPF

Greg Binnie's sunburn looks agonizing.



It's been drilled into you repeatedly: If you're going to be outside during the day, you should wear sunscreen. And, while you probably do your best to slather on the SPF as much as possible, sometimes you forget. That's what happened to Greg Binnie from Scotland, and the results look pretty painful.

Binnie first tweeted a photo of his very red shoulders and neck on June 17 with the caption, "who sells aftersun?" Two days later, he wrote a tweet saying that he was off work due to his sunburn and his body was "in bits." And that was followed up by a tweet featuring graphic photos of his sunburned skin covered in blisters. "In all seriousness, put on sun cream," he wrote. "2nd degree burns from doing a days work outside lol. Am in f—ing agony."



He later added that he thought he knew what pain felt like, since he's cracked his knee cap and broken his ankle three times, but having a shower with a second-degree sunburn "tops the lot."

### **Second-degree burns impact the epidermis, or outer layer of skin, and some of the dermis, the middle layer of skin.**

That's as opposed to first-degree burns, which impact only the epidermis, and third-degree burns, which affect the epidermis and entire dermis or more, **Gary Goldenberg**, M.D., assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, tells SELF.

The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) says that, along with first-degree burns, second-degree burns are actually pretty common—but that doesn't mean that they're any less awful. "Second-degree sunburns blister and can be considered a medical emergency if a large area is affected," the AAD states on its website.

Cynthia Bailey, M.D., a diplomate of the American Board of Dermatology and president and CEO of Advanced Skin Care and Dermatology Inc., tells SELF that second-degree burns are especially likely to happen in people with fair skin when they don't use sunscreen. "It is a normal result of overdose, or poisoning, of UVB exposure on your skin," she explains. (UVB rays are short-wave ultraviolet light that can cause sunburn.) "The overdose

causes a cascade of inflammation that leads to pain, redness, swelling, and the same inflammation physiology you associate with other types of pain, like arthritis.”

When someone suffers a second-degree burn, swelling and fluid retention can happen in their skin, which will lead to blistering. “In severe cases, you will also feel ill because the inflammation spreads to sicken your entire body,” Dr. Bailey says, where it can cause a fever, chills, nausea, a rapid heart rate, or low blood pressure.

### **Unfortunately, a sunburn can have bigger health implications beyond the immediate pain.**

Burns can harm your cells' DNA, which increases your risk of skin cancers later in life, including melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer, Joshua Zeichner, M.D., a New York City-based board-certified dermatologist, tells SELF.

While you're probably OK if you get the odd sunburn, there is a scientific link between unprotected sun exposure, sunburns, and skin cancer. A large cohort study of nearly 109,000 women published in the journal *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* in 2014 found that having five or more blistering sunburns before the age of 20 was linked with a 60 percent higher risk of melanoma. The opposite is also true: A large population-based cohort study published in *The Journal of Clinical Oncology* in 2016, found that people who used sunscreen that was SPF 15 or higher had a “significantly decreased” melanoma risk compared to those who used a lesser SPF.

Obviously, prevention is key, which is why Dr. Goldenberg urges people to use sunscreen (the AAD recommends using a sunscreen of at least SPF 30 or higher, which blocks 97 percent of the sun's UVB rays), wearing sun protective clothing with UPF (ultraviolet protection factor), and trying to hang out in the shade when you can. If possible, Dr. Zeichner says it's also good idea to avoid the sun during the peak hours of 10 A.M. and 2 P.M., and if you can't, definitely take whatever sun-protection precautions are available to you.

### **No matter how safe you try to be, sometimes you miss a spot, forget to reapply sunscreen, or forget it altogether, and get burned as a result.**

If you suffer from an intense sunburn, Dr. Bailey recommends calming your skin with cool water compresses four times a day and moisturizing with lotion after each treatment. Then, take an anti-inflammatory like aspirin. Applying pure aloe vera gel and cortisone cream within six hours of the burn can help, she says, but anesthetics like benzocaine won't.

You can also make your own milk compress to soothe your skin, using skim milk and ice cubes in a bowl, Zeichner says. Put a washcloth in it, apply it to your skin until the compress feels warm, and then reapply.

If you start to see blisters or start peeling severely, Dr. Goldenberg recommends calling your dermatologist. “Prescription cream or pills may be necessary,” he says, adding that it's also a good idea to have your skin checked after the sunburn goes away to make sure you don't have any signs of skin cancer.

Again, sunburns happen and maybe you've had a few in your life already. But wearing sunscreen and taking sun-protective measures can go a long way toward protecting your skin in the future and warding off a world of hurt.