

How to Cool Burns from Chili Peppers

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Chili peppers, such as jalapeño, serrano, [cayenne](#), habanero, and ghost peppers, contain capsaicin, which is the main ingredient in pepper spray. Capsaicin adds flavor and spiciness to food but can also cause an extreme burning sensation on the hands and other body parts or in the mouth. Luckily, there are household ingredients, such as milk, that will cool the burn.

Method 1

Method 1 of 3: Cooling Burning Skin from Chili Peppers



1 Use dish soap on hands or skin. You can run for the hand soap, but dish soap will be more effective at dissolving the oils in chili peppers. Many people report a painful burning feeling on their skin if it comes into contact with chili pepper oil.

- You could also try periodically dipping your fingers into a mixture of water and bleach (5 to 1 water to bleach) as you cut the chili peppers.
- The bleach turns the capsaicin into water-soluble salt. You can then rinse it away with water.
- Take care to not get any bleach on the peppers, though. Wash your hands with the dish soap when you are done cutting the peppers.



2 Use alcohol to cool your hands or other areas of the skin. Chili oil and capsaicin, the culprits when it comes to the burning sensation, are soluble in alcohol.

- Splash **rubbing alcohol** on your hands. Even if you use other methods to cool your hands, you could start with rubbing alcohol to cleanse them.[1]
- Reach for the liquor cabinet, and choose a high-proof alcohol like **vodka**. Rub it on your hands or other affected body parts to wash away the burning oils.
- Another possibility is to make a baking soda paste out of **baking soda** and water. Smear it on your hands, and wait for it to dry before washing it off.



3 Put your hands in a bowl of milk. Choose ice-cold milk. Try adding ice cubes to the bowl. Plunging your hands in a bowl of ice water can work instead, but it's not as effective.

- Some people report that the burning sensation from chili peppers is painful and can last for a couple hours, so it's understandable if you want an immediate remedy.
- Try adding flour to the bowl of milk create a pair of paste gloves. Leave it on for several minutes before washing it away.
- Put rubbing alcohol on your hands before putting them into ice water or milk. Milk is best, and cold milk is better yet.[2]



4 Put oil on your hands or other areas of your skin that are affected. The hot chili oils will dissolve with other kinds of oil, lessening the burning sensation.^[3] You could also reach for the Vaseline, and put it on your hands.

- Rub your hands with a small amount of either vegetable oil or olive oil before you cut the peppers or after your hands start to burn.^[4]
- Don't use so much oil that your hands become very slippery and create the danger of the knife slipping, though. Be careful when touching other people, such as babies, after getting chili oil on your hands because you can transfer it to them.
- Coat your hands lightly with the oil in order to prevent the burning from occurring in the first place. The oil can also cool the burn after you've already touched the peppers. Dip your hands in a bowl of olive or vegetable oil.^[5]



5 Cool stinging eyes from chili peppers. Sometimes people make the major mistake of rubbing their eyes while cutting chili peppers. This can cause a burning sensation in your eyes.

- First of all, it's very important not to do this in the first place. However, if you do, soaking the eye area with milk can help.^[6]
- Take a makeup remover pad or a paper towel, and dab it into a small bowl of milk. Then, dab it around the eye area, much as you would a compress.
- You may need to repeat this process several times to get enough relief, as the pepper oil will likely burn for a while. If the burning doesn't go away or affects your vision, see a doctor.
- If the burning persists, you could also fashion an eye sling out of cotton balls or paper towels, and wear it for a few hours. Use a butterfly clip and gauze.

Method 2 of 3: Cooling the Mouth from Chili Peppers



- 1 Grab some cold dairy.** Instead of water, drink milk! The fat and oil in dairy products will lessen the burn by dissolving the capsaicin.^[7]
 - Grab a cup of whole milk, and down it all. Make sure you rinse your mouth well first. ^[8] As another option, you could choose a dairy product like full-fat sour cream or yogurt.
 - Milk works almost like a soap by dissolving the capsaicin and reducing the burning sensation in your mouth. There's a protein found in milk called casein that acts like a detergent against capsaicin. The burning sensation in chili peppers comes from capsaicinoids, which are a family of molecules.^[9] ^[10]
 - Ice cream can also help. Anything with dairy in it could help ease the burning sensation you're experiencing. Coconut milk works very well to cut the burn and modulate the heat level of a spicy recipe.^[11]



- 2 Avoid drinking water to cool your mouth.** Believe it or not, but the heat is not going to go away if you drink water. In fact, it will actually spread the capsaicin around your mouth and make the burning feel worse.
- Soda is largely made of water and also won't work. Drinking coffee will make it worse, because of the heat in the coffee. Capsaicin has oil-like qualities, which is why it repels water.^[12]
 - The burning sensation in your mouth from chili peppers probably won't last as long as it does on your hands. It's caused when the capsaicin bonds with the mouth's pain receptors due to a chemical reaction.
 - The nerve cells notice when the temperature in your mouth gets above 108 degrees Fahrenheit, which capsaicin tricks the neurons into reacting to.



- 3 Swig alcohol.** Beer won't work as well because it's largely water, but some harder alcohols will remove the burning sensation from your mouth.
- Take a few sips of vodka. In addition to reducing the burning sensation, it's likely to make you feel pretty mellow as long as you don't drink too much!
 - Alcohol will cool the burning sensation you get from touching chili peppers too. Many different types of spirits will work.
 - Always be cautious when drinking. Don't drink too much, don't drink if you're underage, and don't drink and drive.



- 4 Use other oils to cool the burn.** Ingesting olive oil or vegetable oil will help cool the burn in your mouth by coating your tongue.
- These oils or peanut butter are high in fat and oil, so they make good choices for natural remedies.
 - The fat and oil in these ingredients disintegrate the heat in the chili peppers, alleviating the burning sensation you're feeling.
 - It might sound counter intuitive, but you need to combat chili oil with other oil, which is why guzzling water is not as effective as vegetable or olive oil.



- 5 Eat starches.** Eat starches if your mouth is burning from ingesting chili peppers. They should give you some relief.
- Although starches like rice and bread aren't going to be as effective at dissolving the capsaicin as fats, oils or alcohol, they will help cool the burn.
 - There is a reason that many cultures serve spicy food alongside white rice (or potatoes). This is common in many Asian and Indian cultures.
 - Eating a spoonful of sugar can also dull the burning sensation. Mix a tablespoon of sugar into a 9 ounce glass of water, and gargle with it. Alternatively, put a teaspoon of honey on your tongue.



6 Try folk remedies. Many people say that different vegetables or food items are cures for chili pepper burns in the mouth.

- Eat some cucumber. This is a common way to deal with too much heat in food served in Indonesia and Thailand. Eat a banana - the texture and sugar content may help soothe the burn as well.
- Eat some chocolate. The high fat content in most chocolate bars will help remove some of the capsaicin from your mouth. Milk chocolate generally has a higher fat content and a higher casein content than dark chocolate and therefore should give better relief.
- Touch the affected area with a soft corn tortilla (lips, mouth, etc.) Try eating a raw carrot. Just take a bite, and the burn will significantly diminish.
- White toothpaste can significantly reduce the burning from habanero oils on the skin. It will likely work in the mouth and/or with other peppers. Eat a lemon wedge, juiced or whole (with all juice), and the acid will help breakdown the oily stuff.

Method 3 of 3: Preventing Burns from Chili Peppers



- 1 Wear gloves.** If you're going to be cooking with hot peppers and you don't wear gloves, you may get what are called "hot pepper hands."
- Your hands will burn and sting, and you should take care not to touch your eyes after your hands contact chili oil! The best solution is to wear vinyl or latex gloves.
 - You can be burned similarly by Thai chilis, serranos, or habaneros. [\[13\]](#)
 - The burning comes from the chili oils and capsaicin that is contained in the peppers. It would be even worse if you touched your eyes with contact lenses in. You'll have to deal with a burning sensation that is uncomfortable.



- 2 Use a sandwich baggie as makeshift gloves.** Don't have gloves lying around? It's better to make gloves out of things you have lying around than to go without.
- Put a plastic sandwich baggie over your hands before you cut the peppers. You might want to fasten it to your wrist with a rubber band.
 - If you don't have gloves or plastic baggies, wrap your hands in paper towels - anything to prevent the chili oil from contacting bare skin.
 - To protect your eyes, wear clear safety glasses and always wash your hands and nail beds thoroughly after handling hot peppers.



3 Embrace the burn. It's not fun to have a burning mouth, but there's some evidence that eating chili peppers on a regular basis is good for your health.^[14]

- Instead of reaching for the sugar, when your energy is lagging, reach for the chili peppers!
- However, just because you reduce the burning sensation in your mouth doesn't mean that you won't still get the metabolic boost from the capsaicin in the peppers; you likely will since the liver enzymes break it down.
- Capsaicin can increase both energy and metabolic levels, helping you to lose weight and generally be healthier.



Community Q&A

Question

What do I do if I still have burning in my hands after six hours even after trying all of the suggestions?



Community Answer

Try using aloe or a burn ointment, and be sure you use soap to actually remove oils or acids from your skin that water alone cannot dissolve. Go to the doctor if the burn is not getting better.

Helpful 28 Not Helpful 4

Question

How long does the burning sensation last on your hands?



Community Answer

It can last a few hours if you don't use effective remedies. Some people have reported that it feels akin to a sunburn.

Helpful 36 Not Helpful 6

Question

How do I cool down my burns using epsom salts?



Community Answer

Dilute it in water and then dip or pour the solution in order to cool your burns.

Helpful 12 Not Helpful 3

Question

Can you get blisters in your mouth from jalapenos?



Community Answer

It's possible if your mouth is super-sensitive. But usually it takes a hotter pepper to have that effect.

Helpful 17 Not Helpful 13

Question

What happens if your leg is numb, because your friend put a chili pepper on it?



Community Answer

Get to the hospital as soon as possible.

Helpful 18 Not Helpful 15

Question

Can you burn your larynx eating raw chilli peppers?



Community Answer

Generally speaking, the burning sensation doesn't mean anything is actually burning or being damaged. The exception is that some studies have found that eating peppers can cause acid reflux in some people, leading to esophageal damage.

Helpful 13 Not Helpful 9

Question

What can you recommend if I got chili oil in my nose?



Community Answer

Get a nasal cleansing bottle (aka a Netty Pot), mix 1 part water and 1 part milk and run it through your nasal cavity. The milk will bind with the oils of the pepper and wash them away.

Helpful 16 Not Helpful 13

Question

What will happen if I drink water instead of milk?



Community Answer

Milk breaks up the oils that are causing the mouth to burn. Water may soothe the burn a bit, but the oils will remain behind.

Helpful 9 Not Helpful 5

Question

My nose is burning. What do I do?



Community Answer

Try ice or flushing it out with cool water. If it doesn't go away, call a doctor.

Helpful 9 Not Helpful 12

Question

What if I eat the whole, raw chili?



Community Answer

You will most likely have bad indigestion and maybe worse. Drink milk or eat yogurt and take an antacid to help. Ice cream, cold drinks and mint candies can help, as well.

Helpful 2 Not Helpful 3

[See more answers](#)



Tips

- If you include ingredients that have lots of natural sugars (grated carrots, sauteed onions, etc.) in a dish with hot peppers, the sugars tend to "bank" the hotness--it's still there, but it's not the first thing you taste and doesn't overwhelm the rest of the flavors.
- Ketchup or tomato juice are other possible options.
- You can also eat a couple pieces of bread.
- The burning sensation should fade away on its own over time.
- Eat a saltine cracker before you drink sugar water. The saltine usually absorbs both the water and pepper oil, helping to soothe the burning sensation.
- Never put any oil on a burn, it traps the heat and makes the burn worse.



Warnings

- Avoid getting peppers on open cuts.

- Avoid getting peppers in your nose, eyes, or any other openings, which is a very painful experience. Pepper spray is made from chili peppers.
- Capsaicin is difficult to fully remove and does not completely wash away with soap and water. If you wear contacts, it is best to use gloves while handling peppers.

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