



Wound Care

An acute wound can occur suddenly, last for a short time, and may heal on its own, while a chronic wound takes about 6 weeks and could damage surrounding tissues. Deep ulcers or open sores, large burns, and infected cuts can turn into chronic wounds.

An **injury** is a scratch caused when a rough surface rubs against the skin. A **laceration** is an irregular wound caused by a hard blow to the skin. A **puncture** wound is usually caused by a sharp, round, and pointed object, such as a needle or nail. A **cut** is caused by an object with a sharp edge, such as a knife or broken glass. It is called an incision when the cut occurs during surgery.

Conditions that delay or stop the healing process could lead to a chronic injury, such as:

1. **Insufficient supply of blood or oxygen** can cause low blood pressure, or narrow or blocked blood vessels. This happens more often if you smoke or have heart or vascular disease. Diseases of the blood, heart, kidney, and lungs can also decrease oxygen supply to tissues.
2. An **infection** occurs when bacteria get into your wound. Objects in the wound, such as glass or metal, could introduce bacteria to the wound. Dead tissue in your wound could give bacteria a place to grow. Diseases like diabetes can also increase your risk of infection. A wound can be infected if it has:
 - Milky, yellow, green, or brownish pus on the wound
 - The area around the wound is red, tender, or warm
 - Fever
3. A **weak immune system**. Some radiation treatments, poor nutrition, in addition to diseases such as cancer and diabetes, can weaken the immune system, making it difficult for it to fight an infection.

4. **Swelling of the tissues** around the wound can cause pressure that decreases blood flow to the area. Inflammation of the tissue with traumatic injuries can occur. It can also happen with conditions that cause a decrease in blood flow to the area, such as heart failure or vascular problems.

Signs and symptoms of a Chronic Wound:

- Bleeding, swelling, or pain in the affected area
- Difficulty moving the affected area
- The wound has gotten bigger or deeper
- Dark or black skin around the wound

Treatment will depend on the severity, its location, and how long you've had the injury. You may need:

- **Anti-inflammatory** drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, help reduce inflammation, pain, and fever. NSAIDs can cause stomach bleeding or kidney problems in certain people. Check with your doctor if you are taking a blood thinner. Do not give this medicine to children under 6 months of age without first obtaining permission from your doctor.
- **Acetaminophen** relieves pain and lowers fever. Ask how much and how often to take them. Acetaminophen can cause liver damage when not taken the right way.
- **Antibiotics** can be given to prevent or treat an infection caused by bacteria.
- The **Td vaccine** is a booster shot to help prevent diphtheria and tetanus. The Td booster can be given to adolescents and adults every 10 years or for certain wounds and injuries.

Caring for a Wound

- Wash your hands before and after healing the wound.
- Keep bandages clean and dry. Do not stop using your wound dressing unless your doctor says it is okay.
- Clean the wound and change the dressing as directed by the doctor.

If a medical condition such as diabetes is delaying wound healing, it is important to treat the condition. Doctors may change your treatment if your wound still does not heal.

- **Debridement** is done to remove anything from the wound that could delay healing and lead to infection. This includes dead tissue, and objects such as small rocks and dirt. Your doctor may use soap and water or a different solution to clean the wound. You can use a syringe to forcefully push the solution into the wound, expelling the dirt. He may also cut out the damaged areas in or around your wound and drain the wound to clear the pus.
- **Dressings** are used to protect the wound and promote wound healing. The wound can be wrapped with an elastic bandage to put some pressure on it. The pressure helps decrease inflammation in the tissues around the wound area. Dressings may come in the form of bandages, gauze, solutions, gels, or foams. They may contain substances to help you heal faster.
- **Negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT)** is also known as wound aspiration, or vacuum therapy. The aspirator uses suction to remove fluid and debris from your wound and bring the sides of the wound closer together. NPWT may also increase blood flow and facilitate the growth of new tissue in the wound.
- **Hyperbaric oxygen therapy** applies more oxygen under pressure within a hyperbaric chamber to improve blood flow.

Habits to help wounds heal faster:

1. **Eat healthy foods and drink fluids as directed.** Healthy foods give your body the nutrients it needs to heal your wound. Fluids prevent dehydration that could decrease the blood supply to your wound. Protein foods include meat, fish, nuts, and soy products. Proteins, vitamin C, and zinc help wound healing.
2. **Don't smoke.** Smoking delays wound healing. It also increases your risk of infection after you have had surgery. Ask your doctor for information if you need help to quit smoking.

Pressure Wound prevention:

- Change positions every 15 minutes while sitting.
- Change your position in bed every 2 hours.
- Raise your legs with pillows to lift your heels while lying down.
- Check your skin or have someone check your skin every day. Check areas that are common to pressure wounds, such as elbows, heels, and buttocks. Common signs of pressure wounds are sores, blisters, or changes in color or temperature.

Social and Emotional Aspect

For tips, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after your medical treatment, please visit your primary care physician or contact the following phone lines:

Medical Advice Line

1-844-347-7801

TTY-1-844-347-7804

References:

CareNotes. Micromedex. Retrieved from © Copyright IBM Corporation 2022

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