

Wound Care

Wounds can be as minor as a simple scrape or as major as a 3rd degree burn. The sooner you treat a wound, the faster the healing occurs.

Guidelines for Wound Care

Keep the area clean and dry unless instructed to do otherwise.

Avoid the direct stream of water when showering if directed by your clinician and try not to submerge the wound in bath water. Use a plastic bag to protect the bandage. If the bandage gets wet, remove and replace with a clean, dry bandage.

Elevate the wound to help relieve soreness and minimize swelling.

For pain take Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) following the directions on the container.

Watch for infection. Despite the best of care, any wound can become infected. If your wound becomes warm, red, swollen, shows pus or red streaks, or feels more painful instead of less painful as the days go by, you must report to your clinician right away.

Watch for bleeding. If your wound should start bleeding, elevate the affected area and apply pressure over the sterile bandage with your hand. Return to University Health Services or go to the nearest emergency department if there is persistent bleeding.

Watch for loss of sensation or function. Occasionally, a patient will discover that there is loss of function or of sensation after repair. Nerves can be successfully repaired up to 3 weeks after the initial injury. Report any changes in strength or sensation.

All wounds heal with scars. Many factors influence how large or visible a scar will become, and it is difficult to predict whether a particular wound will heal with a noticeable scar. While a scar is forming, it will undergo many changes in both texture and color. This is normal and should be expected. Scars improve in appearance over six months to one year.

Care of the Dressing

Change the dressing _____ times per day, following these instructions:

- Wash your hands and then the wound.
- Pat the wound dry, do not rub. Apply antibacterial ointment sparingly after each cleaning for the first 3 days, if indicated. Use caution to watch for reaction to the ointment, some patients are allergic/sensitive to Neosporin or other antibacterials.
- Redress the wound if instructed to do so by your provider.

Follow-up Care

If your wound was closed with sutures (stitches), staples, steri-strips or skin adhesive do not remove the materials yourself. Removing materials may lead to infection, scarring or reopening of the wound.

After the wound heals, be sure to apply a sunscreen (#30) over the wound if you plan to sunbathe or use a tanning light. This will help to limit excessive scarring and discoloration.

Re-checking the Wound

Return in _____ days for wound a re-check.

Suture Removal

Return in _____ days to evaluate the wound for possible stitch removal.

Steri-strips

Steri-strips should be left in place 5 to 7 days and must be kept dry. If the wound gets wet, the Steri-strips will loosen and the wound may reopen. They can be left on until they fall off on their own with trimming of the lifted edges as necessary.

Skin Adhesive

The adhesive will usually remain in place for 5 to 10 days and then will peel off on its own.

Do not use any kind of ointments or rub/pick at the wound or the adhesive could loosen too soon, opening the wound.

Burns

- 1st degree—causing pain and redness
- 2nd degree—blister and loss of the top layer of skin
- 3rd degree—damaging the entire skin layer

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First-degree burns will heal without special treatment. But deeper burns require a dressing and careful attention to prevent infection. Burn parts will heal in the position you keep them. It is easier to exercise now and keep motion than to stretch out healed skin later. All fingers should be wrapped separately so that they can be exercised. It is better to exercise five to ten minutes four times a day than 30 minutes once a day.

Tetanus

Tetanus is a serious bacterial wound infection that occurs in wounds almost exclusively in people who have never been immunized or who have inadequate immunization. Tetanus boosters are recommended every 10 years for most individuals.

If diphtheria/tetanus toxoid has been given, apply ice to the injection site for 24-48 hours if redness, swelling and soreness occur.

Please Read

If you develop any new, prolonged, or more severe symptoms of your illness, call the nurse at 863-4463 or consult your personal clinician.

In an emergency go to Mount Nittany Medical Center or call 911 for an ambulance.

Test Results and Advice Nurse

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

Appointments

Appointments can be made online via the UHS website, by phone or in person. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel.

Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments call 863-0774 or schedule your appointment online through the UHS website

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