

Wound Care

Proper care of cuts, scrapes and lacerations is important to prevent infection and promote good healing. For small cuts, abrasions or scrapes, the wound can be cleansed with warm tap water and a mild soap. Harsh cleansers such as peroxide should be avoided as they may cause more irritation to the wound and surrounding tissue.

Leaving a wound open to air will actually aid in healing. It is not necessary to cover the wound unless the wound is in an area that will be exposed to dirt, such as on the hands or feet. You may also want to cover the wound if it is in an area that is frequently irritated by clothing. Bandages should be changed daily or when dirty.

Antibiotic ointment can help to keep dirt and bacteria out of a wound. Apply ointment sparingly twice daily after cleaning the wound. **One exception: do not apply antibiotic ointment to a laceration that has been closed using skin adhesive as this will break down the adhesive too quickly!**

To care for stitches, the same information applies. Keeping the wound clean and dry reduces scar formation. Generally, you can remove the initial bandage after 24 hours. Return for suture removal according to instructions, usually in 4-10 days.

A Tetanus booster is given if the wound is dirty or caused by an unsanitary object, such as a nail or broken glass and if it has been more than 5 years since your last tetanus shot.

You should notify the healthcare team for any of the following:

- The cut becomes tender or inflamed
- The wound begins to drain thick, creamy fluid
- You start to run a fever/temperature over 100 F°
- Red streaks form near the wound

Web links for more information:

Web MD: <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/wound-care-10/default.htm>

Family Doctor: <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/staying-healthy/first-aid.html>

If you are a registered Millersville University student and you have questions or you need to make an appointment, please call Millersville University Health Services at 871-5250.