

# CUTS AND ABRASIONS

## INTRODUCTION

Exercise often leads to minor cuts and scrapes, especially if it is done outdoors in the open air...just ask any mom who has a little rugby player in the house!

Cuts and scrapes usually do not require a trip to the emergency room. Yet proper care is essential to avoid infection or other complications. It is essential to keep calm and to try and keep the patient calm. Reassure them that you can help.

## SIMPLE WOUNDS – WHAT TO DO

### First step

Wash your hands thoroughly.

### Stop the bleeding

- Minor cuts and scrapes usually stop bleeding on their own.
- Most other wounds respond to gentle, direct pressure with a clean cloth or bandage. Hold the pressure continuously for 10 to 20 minutes and if possible elevate (lift) the wound.
- Do not keep checking to see if the bleeding has stopped because every time the bandage is lifted, it may dislodge the clot that has formed and cause bleeding to resume. If the cloth gets soaked with blood, just add another on top.
- If the continued pressure fails to stop the bleeding or if bleeding is rapid, seek medical assistance.

### Clean the wound

- Rinse the wound with clear, running water. Soap can irritate the wound, so try to keep it out of the actual wound.
- Do not scrub the wound, however try and remove any dirt particles from the area by letting water run over it for several minutes. Dirt left in the wound can cause infection and scarring.
- If dirt or debris remains in the wound after washing, use tweezers cleaned with alcohol to remove the particles.
- Do not dig into the wound as this may push bacteria deeper into the wound. If debris still remains, see the doctor.

### Apply an antiseptic lotion or cream

After cleaning the wound, apply a thin layer of an antibiotic or antiseptic cream or antiseptic liquid to help keep the surface moist. The products do not make the wound heal faster, but they can discourage infection and help the body's natural healing process.

### Cover the wound

Cover the area with a bandage (such as gauze or a Band-Aid) to keep the wound clean. This will prevent infection and prevent dirt from getting into the wound.

### Change the dressing

- It is a good idea to check the wound to see that it is healing, however changing the dressing must be done VERY carefully to prevent the wound from bleeding.
- The best way is to soak the dressing with water before removal. In this way any dry blood that got stuck to the dressing will not pull on the newly formed clot and scar tissue.
- In the beginning it is a good idea to inspect the wound daily for signs of infection, however as soon as it becomes dry and infection is unlikely, the wound can be left open to speed up the healing process.

### Get stitches

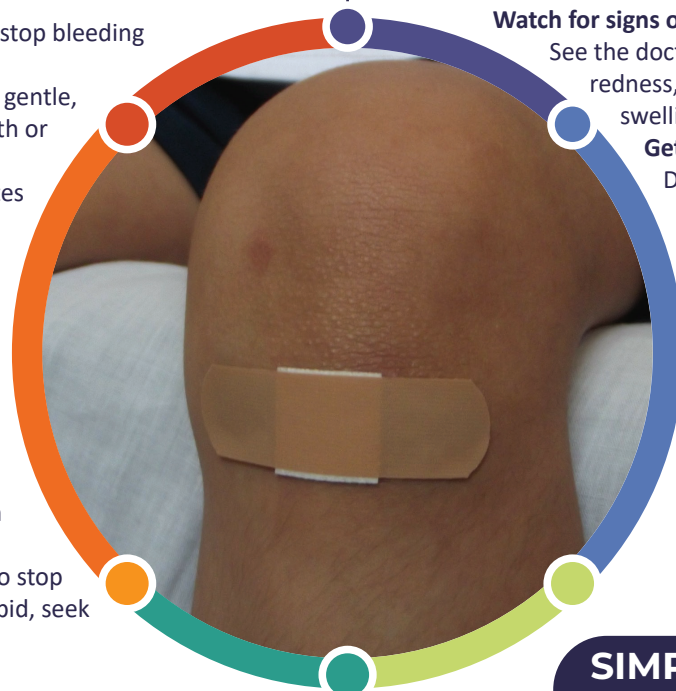
- The following wounds might need stitches:
  - A wound that is more than 6 mm deep
  - A gaping or jagged-edged wound
  - A wound that has fat or muscle protruding
  - A wound over a joint that will be used regularly.
- Adhesive strips or butterfly tape may hold a minor cut together, but if the wound cannot easily be held together, see the doctor as soon as possible. Proper closure within a few hours reduces the risk of infection.

### Watch for signs of infection

See the doctor if the wound is not healing or if any redness, increasing pain, drainage, warmth or swelling occurs.

### Get a tetanus shot

Doctors recommend a tetanus shot every 10 years. If the wound is deep or dirty and the last shot was more than five years ago, the doctor may recommend a tetanus shot booster. Get the booster as soon as possible after the injury.



## SIMPLE WOUNDS – WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

- If the wound is bleeding heavily and does not stop after five to ten minutes of direct pressure
- Wounds deeper or longer than 5 - 6 mm
- Located close to the eye
- Gaping or jagged edge, where skin margins are separated
- Large cuts on the face
- A puncture wound
  - Some punctures can be very deep and do not usually bleed much, however treatment is necessary to prevent infection. Bacteria and debris are forced deep into the tissue and the wound closes quickly forming an ideal place for bacteria to grow.
- Wounds that were caused by a dirty or rusty objects
- When wounds are embedded with debris such as dirt, stones, or gravel and difficult to clean
- Wounds caused by an animal or human bite



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# DISCLAIMER

## TAKE NOTE

The information provided in this article is for education purposes only and does not serve as a medical diagnosis. Members should always consult their healthcare provider with serious symptoms.

Please note that Heritage Health plans do not necessarily cover the costs of the condition/s described.

