

## Basic Wound Care

Recently, there has been a lot of talk on what constitutes good wound care. Proper care of wounds can help prevent infection and also speed up the body's healing process.

These basic wound care guidelines can help you care for minor cuts and scrapes:

1. **Always Wash your hands.** This helps avoid infection.
2. **Stop the bleeding.** Minor cuts and scrapes usually stop bleeding on their own. If needed, apply gentle pressure with a clean bandage or cloth and elevate the wound until bleeding stops.
3. **Clean the wound.** Rinse the wound with clean, tepid water. Gently wash the wound with mild soap as hydrogen peroxide or iodine can be irritating to the wound. Remove any dirt or debris with a tweezers that has been first cleaned with alcohol. See a doctor if you can't remove all debris. For minor burn wounds, run cool water over the area or apply a clean, cool, wet cloth. If blisters form, do not pop or drain as this can lead to infection. Bite injuries from animals or humans, may require additional attention and should be discussed with your Dr.
4. **Apply an antibiotic ointment if not allergic to these products.** Apply a thin layer of an antibiotic ointment to keep the surface moist and help prevent scarring.
5. **Cover the wound.** Apply a bandage, rolled gauze or gauze held in place with adhesive tape. Covering the wound keeps it clean. If the injury is just a minor scrape or scratch, it is OK to keep it uncovered.
6. **Change the dressing.** Do this at least once a day or whenever the bandage becomes wet or soiled.
7. **Get a tetanus shot.** Tetanus is an uncommon but serious infection that can occur after a skin injury. It is important to get a tetanus shot if you haven't had one in the past five years and the wound is deep or dirty.
8. **Watch for signs of infection.** See a doctor if you see signs of infection on the skin or near the wound that include: redness or "streaking" from the wound, increased pain or swelling of the wound, difficulty moving the affected area, pus or odorous wound drainage, warmth around the site and a fever higher than 100.4.

Usually minor cuts and scrapes do not require a trip to the emergency room. However, if the wound is deep, jagged, or exposing fat or muscle, see a doctor as soon as possible, as stitches may be needed.

To review, see your Dr. if the wound is deep or jagged as mentioned above, the wound is from an animal or human bite, a tetanus shot is needed or there are signs or symptoms of infection. Remember that proper wound closure within a few hours not only reduces the risk of infection but can minimize scarring as well.