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How to Choose the Best Dressing for Wounds

Overview

Wounds come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from the superficial to the life-threatening. Most small wounds can be tended without a trip to the doctor or hospital. Deep wounds, jagged wounds and punctures can require professional medical attention due to their increased risk for bacterial infection or slow healing. Severe bleeding wounds always need emergency help and should be taken very seriously. With a few basic supplies, you can take care of most wounds yourself or at least stop the bleeding of more serious injuries until medical attention arrives.

Basic Wound Dressing

Step 1

Assess the severity of the wound, including length, depth and blood loss. Cuts and scrapes are small openings in the skin with little to no bleeding. The wound may seem to close up almost immediately. Apply a self-adhesive bandage to a small wound to prevent bacteria from entering the opening.

Step 2

Gauge the depth and width of the wound. Determine if the wound has entered the muscle layer. Deep wounds are openings in the skin more than 1/4 inch deep and may have gaping or jagged edges. Medical tape or butterfly bandages will join the wound's edges. Layer gauze over the wound and tape it down to prevent dirt from getting into the wound area. Have stitches put in by a trained medical professional if the wound has gaped edges that will not stay closed or jagged edges that protrude from the bandage.

Step 3

Apply pressure to any wound that bleeds. Hold gauze on the wound for 5 minutes or more to stop bleeding, then bandage it with layers of gauze and tape. Blood loss that persists longer than 20 minutes is a severe bleeding wound that requires a packing of gauze to stop blood flow. Apply direct pressure with sterile gauze, and do not move the bandage to look at the wound. Bind the wound with a tourniquet of fabric, a belt, a bandana, or tape. Apply another layer of gauze or fabric if the wound bleeds through. Repeat as needed to stem the flow of blood, but do not remove the initial layer of gauze. Apply pressure to the main artery in that part of the body, and call for medical attention immediately.

Step 4

Know the source of the wound to determine the risk of bacterial exposure. Stepping on a nail or tack or being bitten by an animal results in a puncture wound. Blood loss is minimal, and puncture wounds close quickly. However, bacteria can be inserted more deeply into the flesh than with a scrape or even a deep wound. Cover with a small self-

adhesive bandage to protect area from bacteria while the wound heals. See your doctor immediately if the puncture wound was inflicted by an animal, as it might be a carrier for rabies.

Skill

- Moderately Easy

Things You'll Need

- Bandages
- Gauze
- Scissors
- Medical tape

Tips

- If you have gone more than five years without a tetanus shot, the doctor may require you to get a booster.
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- Close a deep wound within the first few hours after the incident to reduce bacterial infection and noticeable scarring.
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- Cover displaced organs with a plastic covering or more gauze to protect them from infection, but do not attempt to replace them back inside the body.

Warnings

- Contact your doctor immediately if you notice any redness, swelling, foul smell or excessive draining, or if you have a fever of 100 degrees or higher.

Keywords

- bandage wound
- wound stitches
- puncture wound

Reference

- [National Library of Medicine - Wounds](#)
- [Mayo Clinic – Puncture Wounds](#)
- [Mayo Clinic – Severe Wounds](#)

Resource

- [Mayo Clinic](#)

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