



This is a guide only and does not replace clinical judgment



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Wound Care

Information for people, family and carers



Wound Care

What is a wound?

- A wound is an injury to the skin or underlying tissue. The normal function of the tissue is damaged.
- Wounds can be accidental, surgical, or occur because of underlying disease (e.g., diabetes).
- A wound will normally take four weeks to heal in older adults.
- The cells and molecules which repair wounds need moisture to grow over the wound and form new tissue.
- Research has found keeping the wound covered with a dressing reduces pain and lowers the risk of infection.

Wounds which are covered and kept moist heal more rapidly than those exposed to air



Contact your health professional for advice on treatment, particularly if:

- you have diabetes or arterial disease
- the wound is not healing within four weeks
- there is a change or increase in pain
- the area around the wound is red, hot to touch, swollen and painful. Some redness and swelling is normal initially, however, this should resolve within a week
- the wound looks yellow, pale or black, has an offensive smell, or is discharging green fluid or pus

Healing a wound

✓ Do

- Eat a nutritious diet high in protein
- If you suffer from cold feet or legs, keep your legs warm
- Seek advice on pain management – pain can restrict blood flow to the wound
- Keep dressings dry (do not wet in the shower, unless instructed)
- Use a dressing type which does not stick to the wound
- Consult your health professional about how often to change the dressings. Most modern dressings require changing once/day or less to promote rapid healing.

✗ Don't

- Do not expose the wound to air or the sun to 'dry out'
- Do not smoke – this reduces the supply of oxygen to heal the wound
- Do not use tapes and adhesives on skin
- Do not wash wounds in sea water