

## WOUND CARE FACT SHEET

Your intact skin is one of your body's most important defenses against infection. When the skin is cut, torn or scraped, the resulting wound can become infected. *Proper wound care can aid healing and prevent infection.*

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### Prevent Infection

#### Scrapes, Minor Cuts, and Burns

- Clean gently every day with lots of water. You may use mild soap. (Do not use iodine, hydrogen peroxide or alcohol as these delay healing.)
- Intact blisters should not be broken.
- You may cover the wound with a thin layer of an over-the-counter antibiotic ointment and a clean bandage, or simply petrolatum ointment to provide wound moisture. (Bacitracin ointment is suggested, but do *not* use an ointment with neomycin in it. Vitamin E can impede healing and is not recommended for use on new injuries.) Slightly moist wounds, when clean, heal better and scar less than dry ones.
- Change the bandage every day and as needed which gives you an opportunity to look for signs of infection.

#### Xeroform Dressings (yellowish gauze) wrapped with a dry gauze

- Keep the Xeroform gauze in place, undisturbed, and dry.
- The Xeroform gauze should stick to your skin. If all or part of it is not sticking, return to the clinic.
- The dry gauze covering the Xeroform gauze needs to stay dry, so replace it as needed, leaving the Xeroform gauze beneath it undisturbed.

#### Cuts with Stitches

- Leave the original dressing in place for the first 24 hours and keep it absolutely covered.
- After the first 24 hours, change the dressing daily and as needed.
- Keep the area clean and covered. After the first 24 hours washing with water (but **do not** immerse in water) is OK as long as the area is promptly dried. Then cover with thin layer of ointment (see above).
- Elevate the wound as much as possible for the first two to three days.
- Return as advised for re-check and suture removal.

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### Wound Infection

*Sometimes wounds get infected even though you are doing all the right things.*

*Therefore, it is important to look at your wound area every day to check for signs of infection.*

#### Call if signs of infection are present

- Increasing redness along or around wound
- Persistent or worsening pain or tenderness (pain when area is touched)
- Local heat (the skin around the wound is hotter than skin further away)
- Draining pus
- Increasing swelling
- Red streaks on the skin
- Fever

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### Tetanus Prevention of Prophylaxis

If you have not been previously immunized and/or have not had a tetanus booster in the previous ten years, an injection for tetanus is recommended following a wound to prevent the development of tetanus or "lock jaw." The injection is usually given in the upper part of your arm and may cause your arm to become tender, warm and/or cause a low-grade fever.

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Visit our website: [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) to learn more about this medical concern or others.

510-642-2000 for an appointment

Clinic Nurse 643-7197 for advice