



Traumatic Wounds

Cuts, scrapes, punctures, bites, and crush injuries

Types of traumatic wounds

- **Abrasion.** A scrape where the top layers of skin are rubbed away. Usually shallow but often full of dirt and gravel.
- **Laceration.** A cut or tear through the skin, sometimes deep, with edges that may be clean or ragged.
- **Puncture.** A small opening from something sharp entering the skin. Looks minor on the surface, but can be deep and carry bacteria far inside.
- **Avulsion.** A piece of skin or tissue torn partly or completely away.
- **Crush injury.** Tissue damaged by heavy force. The skin may look almost normal at first while damage develops underneath over the following days.
- **Bite wound.** From an animal or a human. All bites are considered contaminated.

What to do first

- Apply firm, steady, direct pressure with a clean cloth to stop the bleeding. Hold it for a full 10 minutes without lifting to peek.
- If you can, raise the injured part above the level of the heart.
- Once bleeding is controlled, rinse with clean running water. Removing dirt and debris matters more than any antiseptic.
- Do not use hydrogen peroxide or full-strength alcohol or iodine in an open wound. They damage the healing cells.
- Cover with a clean, non-stick dressing.
- Do not remove an object that is deeply embedded or impaled. Stabilize it in place and get emergency help.



Go to an emergency department if

- Bleeding will not stop after 10 to 15 minutes of firm direct pressure, or blood is spurting
- The wound is deep, gaping, or you can see fat, muscle, tendon, or bone
- The wound is on the face, or crosses a joint, or is on the hand
- There is numbness, weakness, or you cannot move the part normally
- The wound was caused by a bite, a rusty or dirty object, or a high-pressure device
- Something is stuck in the wound
- You have not had a tetanus shot in the last five years for a dirty wound, or ten years for a clean one

How we treat it

- **Thorough cleansing and debridement.** Anything left in a wound, gravel, grass, glass, or dead tissue, becomes a source of infection and can leave permanent tattooing in a scrape.
- **Assessing depth and structures.** We look for involvement of tendon, joint, and bone, and arrange imaging or surgical referral when needed.
- **Infection risk management.** Bites, punctures, and farm or water injuries carry specific organisms, and we culture and treat accordingly.
- **Choosing the closure approach.** Some wounds are closed, some are left open on purpose to heal from the base up, and some are closed a few days later after infection risk has passed.
- **Ongoing dressing management** and monitoring for the days and weeks it takes to close.
- **Tetanus status review.**

What you can do at home

- Wash your hands before and after every dressing change.
- Keep the wound covered and follow the change schedule we give you.
- Keep the wound out of pools, lakes, rivers, hot tubs, and the ocean until it is fully closed.
- Rest and elevate the injured part for the first few days to limit swelling.
- Eat protein and drink fluids.
- Do not smoke while a wound is healing.
- Once closed, protect the new scar from sun for a year to keep it from darkening permanently.



When to call us right away

- Increasing pain, redness, warmth, or swelling after the first two days
- A red streak spreading away from the wound
- Thick, cloudy, green, or foul-smelling drainage
- Fever above 100.4 F or chills
- Numbness, tingling, or new difficulty moving the area
- The wound reopening, or not looking smaller after two weeks
- Severe pain that seems out of proportion to how the wound looks