

# Wound Care

## Introduction

You need to care for your wound! Your body heals ... doctors don't. Neglecting your wound or eating a poor diet delays healing. While sutures can set the stage for good wound healing, your body has to mend itself. Some patients heal fast, others slow. Follow these suggestions to heal faster.

## Keep the Wound Clean

Clean your wound and apply a fresh clean dressing daily. A clean wound heals much faster, with less scarring, than a neglected wound.

*What is the best way to clean a wound and stop potential infection?* Simple soap and water. Treat your wound gently, don't injure it further. Even plain tap water works well.

In the opinion of this author, **don't** use hydrogen peroxide. Yes, hydrogen peroxide kills 100% of all viruses and bacteria it touches. However ... it also kills 100% of living tissue it touches. Injured tissue is growing new cells, bridging the gap and binding your wound edges together. Hydrogen peroxide kills these cells and prevents proper healing. Sterile but dead tissue is excellent food for bacteria and promotes infection.

## Don't leave a scab

Your wound will leak and ooze liquid, protein and cells creating what we know as a scab. Popular culture says that scabs are "*nature's bandaids.*" This is wrong. Scabs do not protect a wound ... they provide food for bacteria. If you leave a scab on a wound, bacteria will feed on the protein slowing healing. Clean your wound once or twice daily, carefully soaking and softening the scab. When soft, pull the scab off so that you just have skin (and sutures if used) left.

## What should I put on the wound?

We recommend **bacitracin ointment** to prevent infection. You may also use **Neosporin** or generic **triple antibiotic ointment** if you are not sensitive or allergic to neomycin. If neosporin makes your skin red and itchy, use bacitracin. Cover with a clean dressing.

## How long do you keep a bandage on?

In general, bandage the area three or four days. If daily chores and work chafe, irritate or soil the wound, then continue a dry bandage for protection and cleanliness.

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## Eat right and take supplements

You need raw materials to heal and rebuild tissue. Deficiencies slow healing.

- Eat at least 1.5 grams of **protein** for every kilogram of bodyweight every day. This translates to 70 grams for a 154 pound individual and 100 grams for a 220 pound person. Good quality proteins include soy, lean chicken, turkey, pork and beef, egg whites and protein powders. Don't worry about the exact number ... just make sure you eat protein with each meal.
- Your body uses **vitamin C** to bind your cells together. When you are injured, you need lots of it. Take one gram of vitamin C in the morning and one gram in the evening. Tablets are better than orange juice.
- Take up to 25,000 IU per day of **vitamin A**. Do not take if you are not pregnant or trying to get pregnant. High dose vitamin A (over 100,000 IU per day for long periods) can be associated with birth defects.
- Take 400 IU of **vitamin E** per day.
- **Zinc** is vital to wound healing. Take 15 to 50 mg three times per day in the form of zinc sulfate or zinc gluconate (not zinc oxide) tablets. Apply zinc oxide (not zinc sulfate) to leg ulcers for faster healing.
- Take 2 to 4 mg of **copper** every day.
- Many **B vitamins** are needed for healing. Take one B complex per day. It will turn your urine bright yellow from the B2.
- **Essential (omega-3) fatty acids** are special fats necessary in every cell wall of our body. Take three 1-gram fish oil capsules in the morning with breakfast and three more with dinner every day. Don't take this if you are on Coumadin (Warfarin).

## Summary

- Don't neglect your wound.
- Clean wounds heal better and faster.
- Scabs slow healing and make it very difficult to remove sutures.
- You can get the sutures wet ... just not for extended periods. Showers are OK.
- Eat a balanced diet with adequate lean protein and little sugar.
- Take a high quality multivitamin and mineral supplement daily.
- Take extra vitamin C.
- Don't smoke.