

# First Aid: Puncture Wounds



A puncture wound is a deep wound caused by a sharp-pointed object. This break in the skin is an open door, inviting dirt and germs to enter your body and cause infection. Seek medical help right away for a puncture wound.

## Step 1. Clean thoroughly

- Don't squeeze the wound.
- If the puncture wound is not severe and does not need medical attention, soak the wound in warm, soapy water to help the injury heal from the inside out.
- Then cover the wound with a gauze dressing to absorb any drainage and let air in for faster healing.

## Step 2. Keep the embedded objects from moving

- If a large object lodges deep in the body, put pressure around the wound to control bleeding. Wear gloves or use other protection as a barrier between you and any blood.
- Wrap gauze or cloth around the object to hold it steady. Tape the wrapping in place.
- Don't increase the risk of internal bleeding by trying to remove an embedded object.
- Seek emergency medical services.

## Call 911

Call 911 right away if the victim has any of the following:

- Uncontrollable bleeding
- Symptoms of shock:
  - Pale or clammy skin
  - Pulse that is so light or races so fast that you can't count the beats
  - Victim is confused or unable to concentrate or stares blankly. Over time, the victim may even become unconscious.
- A large object, such as a knife, is embedded in the body

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider or seek medical attention right away if any of these occur:

- The wound covers a large area or is deep.
- The ear or eye is punctured.
- An object, such as a nail, remains lodged in the body.
- The injury is on the face or any area where scarring is a concern.

- The person needs protection against tetanus. This is a disease caused by bacteria that may enter any break in the skin and bring on a life-threatening illness called lockjaw. The body's defenses may need a booster injection if it's been more than 5 years since the last tetanus vaccine.

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