

# Self-Care for Cuts, Scrapes, and Burns



Cuts, scrapes, and burns are hard to prevent. Most minor injuries can be treated at home. A small wound may threaten your health if it causes severe blood loss or becomes infected. Call your healthcare provider if a wound doesn't heal within a couple of weeks.

## When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your healthcare provider right away if:

- You can't stop the bleeding.
- The wound covers a large area, is deep, or you can see muscles, tendons, or bones.
- You can't move a part of an extremity, such as a finger after a cut. This could mean that a tendon was cut.
- Your ear or eye is injured or burned.
- The burn is larger than the size of your palm, or is on your neck, face, foot, groin, or your hand.
- A puncture wound is deep or wide, or was caused by a dirty or rusty object.
- You have signs of infection: fever, pus, pain, or redness.
- It has been 10 years or more since your last tetanus shot.

## Caring for cuts, scrapes, and puncture wounds

If you're caring for someone else, remember to protect yourself from illnesses carried in blood and body fluids. Use gloves or whatever else is available (a towel, perhaps) as a barrier between you and the blood.

### Step 1. Control bleeding

- Apply direct pressure to a cut or scrape to stop bleeding.
- Allow a minor puncture wound to stop bleeding on its own, unless the bleeding is heavy. This may help clean out the wound.

### Step 2. Clean the wound

- Kill germs and remove the dirt by washing the wound with clean, running water and soap.
- Soak a minor puncture wound in warm, sudsy water for several minutes. Repeat this at least 2 times every day.

### Step 3. Cover the injury

- Hold the edges of a cut together with a butterfly bandage.
- Apply antibiotic ointment.
- For a cut or scrape, apply an adhesive bandage or clean gauze. Tape it in place.

- Cover a minor puncture with gauze to absorb drainage and let in air to help with healing.

## **Treating minor burns**

- Cool the burn immediately. Otherwise, the skin continues to hold heat and will keep burning. Use cloths soaked in cool water, place the burned area under a gentle stream of cool water, or submerge the burn in a full sink or bucket.
- Treat a minor burn like you treat a minor cut or scrape. Clean and cover it with a loose dressing.
- Don't put butter, oil, or ointment on a burn. This only seals in heat. After you cool the area, you can apply a moisturizer with aloe vera (with or without a numbing agent) to soothe the burn.
- Don't break blisters or pull off skin from a broken blister. This skin helps protect the healing skin underneath.

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