

First Aid: Cuts and Scrapes



A break in the skin is an open door, inviting dirt and germs to enter your body and cause infection.

Step 1. Control bleeding

- Apply direct pressure for at least 5 minutes.



Step 2. Clean and cover

- Wash the scrape or cut with soap and water to kill germs and remove dirt and foreign objects.
- Apply a topical antibiotic to minor cuts and scrapes that don't need medical attention (see below).
- Cover the wound with a clean gauze dressing to reduce the risk of infection and further injury. Keep the dressing in place with a gauze or cloth bandage.
- Don't tie or tape the bandage too tight.



When to call the healthcare provider

Call the healthcare provider or get medical care right away if any of the following is true:

- The wound covers a large area or is deep.
- The injury is on the face or any other 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. A tetanus booster shot (injection) may be needed if it's been more than 5 years since the last tetanus vaccine.

Call 911

Call 911 if the injured person has any of the following:

- Uncontrollable bleeding (continue to control bleeding with direct pressure)
- Shock symptoms:
 - The skin is pale or clammy
 - The pulse is so light or races so fast that you can't count the beats.
 - The person is confused or unable to concentrate, or stares blankly. Over time, the person may even become unconscious.
- A detached body part:
 - Wrap all pieces of the detached part in a damp paper towel or washcloth. Put them in a plastic bag or other container first.
 - Then put the bag or container in ice or cold water to improve chances for reattachment.
 - Send the parts to the hospital along with the person.

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