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## How to Care for an Open Wound

An open wound is when someone has a break in their skin tissue usually due to accidental injury. Open wounds can be caused many ways, for example, cutting oneself with a knife, falling and scraping a knee or elbow, or being bit by an animal. Following simple wound care steps which include, stopping the bleeding, cleaning the wound, and covering the wound can go a long way in proper healing, preventing infections, and reducing scarring (7 Steps for Caring for Wounds; How to Care for Open Wounds).



Figure 1: Examples of Minor Open Wounds adapted from How to Care for Open Wounds

### Materials you will need:

- Soap and water
- Hand Sanitizer
- Clean cloths and bandages
- Saline solution
- Sterile gauze, bandages, or dressings
- Tweezers sterilized with alcohol
- Antibacterial ointment
- Medical tape
- Wound closure strips

### Step-by-Step Instructions:



Figure 2 from How to set up an effective wound care formulary and guideline



Figure 3 from The importance of hand washing for kids,

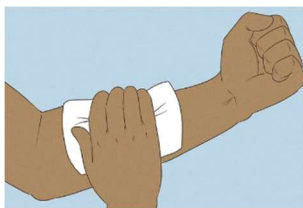


Figure 4 adapted from How to Treat an Open Wound

1. First, gather the materials needed. See the “Materials you will need” section.

2. Next, wash and sanitize your hands.

Wash your hands with soap and water. If available, use hand sanitizer to help avoid infection.

3. Then, stop the bleeding.

Check for large debris. If there is no large debris, place a clean cloth or sterile gauze/bandage over the wound and apply pressure. See Figure 4.

If possible, elevate the wounded area above the heart.

Warning: If bleeding profusely or bleeding will not stop, seek medical attention immediately.



Figure 5 adapted from How to Treat an Open Wound

4. Next, clean the wound and area around it.

Clean the area around the wound with soap and water.

Clean the wound with water.

Caution: Do not get soap directly into the open wound.

Do not use Hydrogen Peroxide, Alcohol, or Betadine to clean the wound.



Figure 6 adapted from How to Heal a Wound Fast

5. Then, remove small debris from the wound.

Use sterilized tweezers to remove small pieces of debris.

Warning: Do not remove large or deeply embedded debris. Seek medical attention in this case.



Figure 7 adapted from How to Treat an Open Wound

6. Next, gently apply antibacterial ointment to the wound.

Using a clean Q-tip or sterile gauze apply a small amount of antibacterial ointment to wound area.



Figure 8 adapted from How to Treat an Open Wound

7. Then, cover the wound.

Apply a sterile gauze, bandage, or dressing to the area.

If the wound is gaping, it may be necessary to use wound closure strips to bind the wound for healing.

Caution: use a non-adhesive pad or dressing in the wound area and use care to use adhesive medical tape to only the area surrounding the wound.

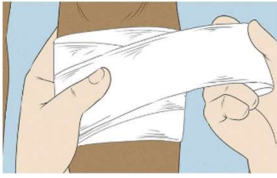


Figure 9 adapted from How to Treat an Open Wound

8. Keep the dressing clean and change it frequently. Change the wound dressing three times a day or as often as it becomes wet or soiled.

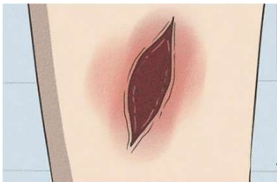


Figure 10 adapted from How to Treat an Open Wound

9. Finally, monitor for signs of infection. If signs of infection or blood poisoning appear, seek medical attention immediately.

Signs Include:

- Redness, swelling, or a red streak around or coming from the wound area. The streak will be going from the wound toward the heart.
- Pus or an odd smell coming from the wound
- Severe pain from the wound
- Fever or hot feeling of the skin around the wound

Source: How to Treat an Open Wound, First aid 101: How to treat a cut, 7 Steps for Caring for Wounds,

By following the step-by-step instructions for open wound care, you will improve your chances of preventing infection, as well as speeding up healing. However, if you have any concerns about your open wound, such as excessive bleeding, a very deep wound, a wound that doesn't stop bleeding, excessive or large debris, or other concerns, seek medical treatment immediately (First aid 101: How to treat a cut, How to Treat an Open Wound).

### Works Cited

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