



Cuts, Punctures & Scrapes

Accidents at work may result in minor wounds such as cuts, scrapes and skin punctures. These types of injuries require first aid to prevent infection.

Cuts and Punctures

- Use a clean cloth, tissue or piece of gauze to apply pressure to the wound to stop bleeding; if the wound is on an arm or leg, raise the limb above the heart to help slow the bleeding.
- Use cool, clean water to clean a wound; hold the wound under gentle running water or fill a tub with cool water and pour it from a cup over the wound.
- You may use soap and a soft washcloth to clean skin around the wound, but keep the soap out of the cut itself to avoid irritation.
- Apply a first-aid ointment, preferably an antibiotic, to prevent infection.
- Apply a bandage to keep the wound clean, if the wound is in a spot on the body that could get dirty; otherwise, leaving a wound uncovered will help it stay dry and start the healing process.
- Change the bandage daily or whenever it is dirty or wet.
- If the worker is due for a tetanus booster, make sure he or she receives one.
- If the wound is deep, jagged and first aid steps cannot close it or stop the bleeding, seek medical attention.

Scrapes

Scrapes should be kept clean and moist to aid healing and reduce scarring. Ask a medical professional if you should use occlusive or semi-occlusive bandages, which are made for scrapes.

Punctures

If a worker suffers a puncture wound, such as stepping on a nail or being bitten by an animal or human, medical experts recommend he or she see a doctor. If the wounded worker has not had a tetanus shot within 5 years, the doctor may recommend a booster shot within 48 hours of the injury. Exposure to a rabid animal through a bite also may mean an antibiotic treatment and a series of rabies vaccinations.

Watch for Signs of Infection:

- Wound becomes tender, inflamed and numb or it is uncomfortable to move.
- Wound shows drainage of thick, creamy, grayish fluid.
- The body temperature climbs to higher than 100 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Red streaks appear near the wound.
- Wound has dirt in it that won't come out.

Sources: Medline Plus, National Institutes of Health, American Academy of Family Physicians

Safety tips developed based on generally accepted safety standards believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes.

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