

**This information was sourced from www.osha.gov
Published by: US Department of Labor**

Cuts/Abrasions

WHAT IS AN ABRASION AND WHAT CAUSES IT?

An abrasion, or scrape, is a shallow wound characterized by a tearing or wearing away of the top layer of skin. A cut is a wound in which the skin is sliced by a sharp edge. Abrasions and cuts often occur because of an accident in which the skin is scraped against a rough surface (abrasion), or the skin is sliced by a sharp edge (cut).

HOW SHOULD I CLEAN A WOUND?

The best way to clean a cut or abrasion (scrape) is with cool water. Use soap and a soft wash cloth to clean the skin around the wound. Do not use a stronger cleaning solution such as hydrogen peroxide as they may irritate the wound.

WHAT ABOUT BLEEDING?

Bleeding helps clean out wounds. Most small cuts or scrapes will stop bleeding in a short time. Wounds on the face, head, or mouth will sometimes bleed a lot because these areas are rich in blood vessels. To stop the bleeding, apply firm but gentle pressure on the cut with a clean cloth, tissue, or gauze pad. If your wound is on an arm or leg, raising it above your heart will also help slow the bleeding.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

Your healthcare provider will initially clean cuts and abrasions. He/she will then determine if stitches are needed. Small cuts may be closed with a special tape called butterfly tape, or special adhesive strips, such as steri strips. Antibiotic ointments, such as Bacitracin help healing by keeping out infection and by keeping the wound clean and moist. Most minor cuts and scrapes will heal just fine without antibiotic ointment, but it can speed healing and reduce scarring. Your provider may leave the wound uncovered or may cover it with a bandage. Leaving a wound uncovered helps it to stay dry and helps it heal. If the wound isn't in an area that will get dirty or be rubbed by clothing, you don't have to cover it. If it is in an area that will get dirty or be irritated by clothing, it will be covered with a Band-aid or with sterile gauze and adhesive tape. The bandage should be changed each day to keep the wound clean and dry.

WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT SCABS?

Nothing. Scabs are the body's way of bandaging itself. They form to protect wounds from dirt. It is best to leave them alone and not pick at them. They will fall off by themselves when the time is right.

WOUNDS WITH INCREASED RISK OF INFECTION OR OTHER PROBLEMS

Dirty wounds are more at risk for infection.

Deep wounds have increased risk of contamination.

Wounds with untidy edges often heal slowly and may heal with disfigurement.

Because hands are used extensively, wounds on hands have increased risk for re-injury and infection.

Wounds that have not been appropriately cared for within approximately 6 hours of the injury have an increased risk of bacterial infection.

Tetanus is a rare but dangerous infection you can get after a wound. The infection is also called "lockjaw", because stiffness of the jaw is the most frequent symptom. To prevent tetanus infection when the wound is clean and minor, you'll need tetanus shot if you haven't had at least three doses before or haven't had a dose in the last 10 years. When the wound is more serious, you'll need tetanus shot if you haven't had at least 3 doses before or if you haven't had a shot in the last 5 years.

REASONS TO SEE THE DOCTOR

If the wound becomes increasingly painful

If there is a significant discharge

If there is spreading of redness around wound or a red streak developing from the wound in the direction of the heart

If you start to run a temperature greater than 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit

If the area around the wound feels numb

If the area becomes increasingly inflamed