

LACERATIONS

Lacerations are cuts or open wounds. They can be minor or very serious. All cuts need first aid and some may also need medical treatment.

Symptoms *may* include:

Pain

Numbness - May indicate damaged nerves

Difficulty moving joints - May indicate tendons and/or ligaments damage

What your doctor can do:

Clean the wound thoroughly and suture it if it is deep or gaping.

Stop the bleeding and provide other emergency measures needed.

Order antibiotics to prevent infection and pain medication if needed.

Give a tetanus shot if you have not had one or have not had a booster in 7 years.

Assess area for damage to nerves, muscle, or bone and treat these injuries.

What you can do:

Wash your hands with soap and water before giving first aid. DO NOT breathe directly on an open wound. Try not to touch it more than needed

Wash small area wounds thoroughly with mild soap and water, even if it does not look "dirty".

See your doctor if you suffer a large wound.

Apply direct pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding. Use a clean dressing or a cloth.

If the wound does not need medical treatment, (**see below**) apply an over-the-counter antibiotic ointment and a clean bandage.

Keep the wound clean, dry, and covered for the first 24 hours. After 24 hours, remove the bandage, wash gently with soap and water. Pat dry and cover with a clean bandage.

Reinforce the wound with tape if a suture (stitch) is displaced (comes out).

Notify your doctor if the wound re-opens.

Watch for signs of infection at the injury site. Look for warmth, swelling, or increased pain; thick, colored, pus-like drainage; or redness around the wound.

Seek medical treatment for an open wound if:

You are unable to stop the bleeding after 15 minutes of direct pressure.

It is likely to get infected. This happens if you cannot remove all of the debris; if it is a bite or puncture wound; if the wound is on the foot; or if it was not cleaned thoroughly.

It is 1/4 inch deep or more, the edges are jagged, or you can see muscle or bone.

It is on the face or another area where scarring is a concern.

There the area is numb or if you cannot move the limb or joint.

If you have not had a tetanus booster in the last 5 years.

What you can expect:

Most lacerations will heal within days.

Infection of the wound can result in complications and require surgical drainage or intravenous (IV) antibiotics.

Delayed healing and scarring can occur.

Contact your doctor if you have fever over 100°F or body aches; or if a red streak runs from the wound. Call within 24 hours if you have signs of infection at the site, if a pimple forms where a stitch comes through, or if a stitch comes out.

Seek immediate medical assistance if blood is spurting from a cut or you are unable to stop the bleeding after 15 minutes of applying direct pressure.