

# Wound Care Advice

**This leaflet offers advice about wounds. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.**

## What is a wound?

A wound is caused when the normal structure of the skin is damaged. This causes a break in the skin.

Wounds are a common problem. Anyone, at any age can have a wound, for many different reasons. It can be caused by a scrape, cut, puncture, blister or an opening made as part of a medical procedure.

Most minor wounds do not require medical treatment.

For instance, small cuts and grazes. Usually, minor wounds will heal by themselves within 7-10 days. If you are unsure, speak with your GP, pharmacist or NHS 111.

If the wound is more serious it may require treatment, including closure or a dressing.

Any wounds caused by a human or animal bite should be checked by a medical professional. These wounds often have a higher risk of becoming infected.

## What is the treatment?

The following methods of treatment can be used depending on the type of wound.

## **Dressing**

Keep the dressing clean and dry. Your clinician will advise you when this can be removed. If your dressing gets wet or comes off sooner than advised, you can contact your pharmacist or GP surgery for advice.

## **Wound Glue**

This is a special type of glue that can be used on skin. Keep the area completely dry for five days and do not soak the wound for 7-10 days. Do not scratch or pick at the glue. The glue should come away by itself in 5-10 days. If it does not, you can gently rub soft petroleum jelly on the area. This should soften the glue to encourage it to come away.

## **Stitches (Sutures)**

This is where a medical needle and thread is used to stitch certain wounds together. Your clinician will advise whether your stitches are dissolvable or not and when they need to be removed. This will usually be from 5 to 14 days. Contact your GP to arrange this with the practice nurse. You may have a dressing over the area.

Keep the dressing on and keep the wound completely dry for two days, unless otherwise instructed. After this you can gently wash around the area with mild soap and water daily, then pat dry.

Be careful not to rub the stitches directly. If you have been prescribed antibiotic ointment, apply this to the area. If instructed to do so or if the wound is rubbing on clothing, apply a simple dressing for protection. Do not soak the wound for at least seven days.

## **Staples**

Medical staples may be used to close the wound. Your clinician will advise you when to have them removed. This will usually be in 7-10 days. Contact your GP to arrange this with the practice nurse. You may have a dressing over the area. Keep this on and keep the wound completely dry for two days, unless otherwise instructed.

When you no longer need to keep your staples dry, you can gently wash around them with mild soap and water daily, then pat dry. If you have been prescribed antibiotic ointment, apply this to the area. If instructed to do so or if the wound is rubbing on clothing, apply a simple dressing for protection. Do not soak the wound for at least seven days.

### **Don't worry about**

- Mild redness around the wound. This is common and is part of the natural healing process.
- You may also notice a small amount of thin clear / yellow fluid as the wound heals. This is normal.
- The wound will likely be painful for a few days. The pain should gradually improve.

### **When should I be worried?**

You should seek medical advice from your GP, pharmacist or call 111 if:

- The closed wound re-opens / stitches or staples break.
- You notice any sign of infection, this includes:
  - Spreading / worsening redness
  - Swelling
  - Heat around the area to touch
  - Pus oozing from the wound (usually thick yellow / green / white coloured fluid)

- There is an unpleasant smell coming from the wound
- Increasing pain
- Fever or feeling generally unwell.

### **Is there anything I can do to help myself?**

**Caring for the wound will reduce the risk of infection and long-term scarring.**

- Keep the wound clean and avoid touching it. Do not pick at scabs or scratch around it.
- Unless instructed otherwise by your clinician, keep the wound completely dry for at least 48 hours and avoid bathing it for seven days.
- Avoid using swimming pools or hot tubs until the wound is completely healed.
- Take “over the counter” pain killers for any discomfort such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen. Speak to your pharmacist if you are unsure which pain killers are suitable.
- If you have been given antibiotics, ensure you complete the full course.
- Once the wound has started to heal, massaging the area can help to reduce the risk of long-term scarring. You can find instructions on how to do this through the link below. (Scar massage).
- Eating a healthy, balanced diet with adequate water intake can help wound recovery. You can find a link to more information about a healthy diet below.

### **Useful sources of information**

Accidents, first aid and treatments:

[Accidents, first aid and treatments - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/accidents-first-aid-treatments/)

Cuts and grazes: [Cuts and grazes - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cuts-and-grazes/)

Healthy Eating: [Eat well - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Scar Massage: [PLS\\_PSM.pdf \(stgeorges.nhs.uk\)](http://stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## Contact us

Contact your GP, pharmacist or 111 if you have questions or concerns about your wound.

In an emergency call 999.

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer). **Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

## AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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