

# General Wound Information

Tissue Viability Service

This leaflet is aimed at informing patients and carers of expectations when a person has a wound.

## What is a wound?

A wound is a break in the skin due to trauma or a medical or surgical condition.

## What types of wounds are there?

There are many different types of wounds; the ones listed below are the most common:

- Surgical
- Trauma injury or skin tear
- Pressure ulcers
- Leg ulcer
- Diabetic foot ulcer
- Burn
- Radiotherapy adverse reaction
- Incontinence associated dermatitis
- Dermatological
- Skin cancer or fungating

Some of these wounds may occur due to underlying health conditions.

## How long will it take for my wound to heal?

It is important to aim to heal your wound within 4 weeks, however certain factors may delay your healing rate such as:

- Poor nutrition and dehydration(not drinking enough fluids)
- Underlying medical conditions or treatments
- Circulation
- Hygiene
- Mobility

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

- Obesity
- Certain medications
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol
- Quality of life and pain control
- What the wound looks like
- Wound infection
- How much exudate (how wet it is) is present
- The size of the wound

It is important to follow advice on managing any of the above to improve your healing rate. Some conditions such as leg ulcers may take 18-24 weeks to heal.

## What types of food and drinks aid healing?

It is important to eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of fluids; a minimum of 1500ml per day (8 cups or glasses). Suggested foods on wards or at home:

- Cup of full fat milk 3-4 times per day (try to use 1 pint per day)
- Cereal with full fat milk at breakfast or as a snack
- Protein at each meal, for example milk and/or yoghurt at breakfast, meat, fish, chicken, cheese, peas, beans, lentils or egg at lunch and dinner
- Sandwiches with protein fillers for example, egg, tuna, cold meats, cheese or peanut butter
- Hot puddings rather than jelly and ice-cream
- Build-up drinks and soups
- Hot drinks like malted drink and hot chocolate made with milk
- Cheese and biscuits (as a snack)
- Milky puddings, for example yoghurt, rice pudding, custard or semolina
- Chunky homemade soups with added peas, beans, lentils, meat, chicken, etc.
- Nuts, seeds or dried fruit
- Fresh, stewed, or tinned fruit

If your appetite is small and food intake is poor, eat small regular meals or snacks throughout the day (including snacks from home where possible). Do drink the supplement drinks that are individually prescribed for you.

## What are the underlying medical conditions?

Some conditions cause wounds and some conditions delay healing, the common problems are listed below:

- Low haemoglobin level in blood, anaemia
- Low albumin level in blood, hypoalbuminaemia
- Infection, sepsis
- Oedema, lymphoedema
- Poor arterial blood flow, ischaemia
- Poor venous return, venous hypertension
- Organ failure such as heart, liver, renal, respiratory
- Cancer

- Cancer therapies, chemotherapy, radiotherapy
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Rheumatoid factors
- Failure to absorb nutrients due to certain conditions such as: poor denture fitting, crohns disease and other bowel disorders, surgery
- Certain medication such as: naproxen (anti-inflammatory), steroids, nicorandil
- Blood disorders

## What if I have a leg ulcer?

- Maintain good hand washing to reduce the risk of infection
- Change clothes daily to reduce the risk of infection
- Avoid pets being near the legs
- Maintain a balanced diet
- Keep moving and do not stand still for long periods
- Wear footwear
- Elevate legs when resting but do not sit for long periods; keep moving
- Complete foot and calf exercises to promote venous and lymphatic return regularly throughout the day. If you find exercises difficult to begin with a health care professional will be able to assist and advise on the most appropriate exercises to gradually build up tolerance
- You may be treated with compression hosiery, wraps (long term) or compression bandages (short term) and then stepped to lifelong compression garments. The therapy will be life long and may feel uncomfortable to start with but as inflammation reduces, your legs will feel more comfortable. The garments may change depending on your legs and changes in circumstances, comfort, or fit
- Self-care will be promoted when safe to share care

Signs and symptoms of red flags where we suggest you need to call a health care professional or bring forward your next appointment so you are seen sooner are:

- New burning sensation
- Loss of sensation (toes appear discoloured); remove top layer of bandages or hosiery
- Bandages have dropped to mid-calf or appear pushed up to mid foot
- Bandages are wet on the outside

## How do I maintain hygiene?

Maintaining a good standard of hygiene is essential to prevent infection. It is advised to use non perfumed soaps when washing and dry skin well. There are some pH balanced products on the market, which your health care professional may advise you about. Regular hand washing is also essential to prevent any cross contamination.

It is important that the wound bed is not touched with bare hands to avoid infection.

## Should I exercise?

Exercise is important to ensure you help your circulation. If you are not able to walk far, it is advised you move your legs frequently to improve your venous and lymphatic return, to help avoid swelling of your feet, ankles and legs. Exercise can help maintain your weight control. There are pedometer devices available to buy to help you monitor your movement, these can help you improve your step count per day, if able.

## What if I am overweight?

If you are overweight, you will be at risk of certain wound types such as pressure ulcers, leg ulcers or wounds to skin folds. Weight control is advised to prevent these wounds. Ask your GP or Health care provider.

## What medications should I use?

Some medications may delay wound healing, please read your medication contraindication list. The most typical types of medication that may affect healing are anti-inflammatory medication; common ones are naproxen and ibuprofen. Long term steroids can also affect healing. It is important you still take your prescribed medication. If your wound fails to heal, then a discussion with your GP or hospital doctor may be required to negotiate an alternative medication. Anticoagulants such as warfarin, clexane and aspirin may cause your wound to bleed more easily. The health care professional treating your wound will consider this when selecting the appropriate treatment for your wound.

## What if I am a smoker?

Stop or reduce smoking as smoking slows down wound healing. Smoking cessation services are available. Ask your health care provider.

## What if I drink alcohol?

Stop or reduce alcohol intake as drinking alcohol slows down wound healing. Health trainers are available to help you reduce or stop your intake. Ask your healthcare provider.

## When should I contact my Health Care Provider?

Inform your healthcare provider if your wound is affecting your daily life by one or more of the following:

- Hurting
- Smelling
- Leaking
- Itching
- Affecting your sleep
- Becoming a burden
- Making you feel unhappy
- Causing difficulty with moving, climbing stairs, day to day activities or limiting leisure activities
- Making you dependent on others or socially isolated
- Affecting your body image and making clothing difficult to wear
- Becoming a financial burden
- Causing frustration as taking too long to heal

## Why does my wound look this way?

Your wound will start to heal when it appears red and granulating. Some wounds may look sloughy (creamy yellow) or necrotic (black) and these wounds may get larger or deeper as they prepare to heal. Your health care provider will aim to debride (removal of dead tissue) with a dressing, in most cases. Your wound may get larger and deeper if debrided, this is normal to aid healing. Dry necrosis on legs and feet will not be debrided unless recommended by a specialist. Your healthcare provider will regularly review you and your wound. This may include medical photography with your consent.

## What are the signs of infection?

What to look out for:

- Red and swollen around the wound
- Wound bed becomes dark red or may appear necrotic (black) or sloughy
- Offensive smell
- Increased pain
- A green or yellow discharge or an increase in discharge
- Feeling generally unwell or a raised temperature
- How much exudate (how wet it is) is being produced
- What size your wound is

Do not interfere with your dressings unless you have been advised by your healthcare provider. Prevent contamination by washing your hands thoroughly after toileting and regularly throughout the day. Keep all your appointments with your healthcare provider.

## Who should I contact for more advice and support?

- Healthy lifestyles
- GP, Consultant
- Nurse, Healthcare provider
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health>
- Wound care websites

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。