

Puncture Wounds

What is it?

A wound made by a pointed object such as a nail, knife, or sharp tooth.

Plan of Action:

- 1. Wash your hands.** This helps prevent infection.
- 2. Stop the bleeding.** Apply gentle pressure with a clean bandage or cloth.
- 3. Clean the wound.** Rinse the wound with clear water for 5 to 10 minutes. If dirt or debris remains in the wound, use a washcloth to gently scrub it off. See a doctor if you can't remove all of the dirt or debris.
- 4. Apply an antibiotic.** Apply a thin layer of an antibiotic cream or ointment (Neosporin, Polysporin). For the first two days, rewash the area and reapply the antibiotic when you change the dressing.
- 5. Cover the wound.** Bandages help keep the wound clean.
- 6. Change the dressing.** Do this daily or whenever the bandage becomes wet or dirty.
- 7. Watch for signs of infection.** See a doctor if the wound isn't healing or you notice any increasing pain, pus, swelling or fever. On light skin, spreading redness is a sign of infection. On dark skin, redness may not be apparent, or the infection's streaks may look purplish-gray or darker than your normal skin.

Seek prompt medical care:

- Keeps bleeding after a few minutes of direct pressure
- Is the result of an animal or human bite
- Is deep and dirty
- Is caused by a metal object
- Is deep and to the head, neck, scrotum, chest, or abdomen
- Is over a joint and could be deep

If the injured person hasn't had a tetanus shot in the past five years and the wound is deep or dirty, your doctor may recommend a booster. The injured person should have the booster shot within 48 hours of the injury.

If the wound was caused by a cat or a dog, try to confirm that its rabies vaccination is up to date. If it was caused by a wild animal, seek advice from your doctor about which animals are most likely to carry rabies.

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