

Cuts and Scrapes

WHAT IS IT?

A cut or scrape is a break or opening in the skin. It can also be called a laceration, abrasion, road rash, etc. It may be deep, smooth, or jagged. It may be near the surface of the skin, or deeper. A deep cut can affect tendons, muscles, ligaments, nerves, blood vessels, or bone.

HEALING

Wounds heal in stages. The smaller the wound, the quicker it will heal. Blood will start to clot within a few minutes and will stop the bleeding. This will form a scab. The scab helps protect the wound from infection while new skin grows underneath. The scab will fall off on its own. Scars form because the new skin grows back differently than the original skin. Scars are more likely with deeper wounds.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE:

- The wound is on your face.
- Bleeding is severe or will not stop after 10 minutes of direct firm pressure.
- Wound edges are jagged or gape open, it is deep, or you can see fat or muscle.
- Wound does not close easily; proper closure with stitches must be within a few hours of the injury.
- Dirt or debris remains in the wound or the wound was caused by something very dirty or rusty.
- You do not know or it has been more than 5 years since your last Tetanus shot.
- The wound is from an animal or human bite.
- The injured area feels numb or does not work the right way.
- You notice signs of infection; redness, swelling, warmth, red streaks, pus, body aches, or fever.

SELF CARE

Wash your hands. This helps avoid infection

Stop the bleeding. Small wounds usually stop bleeding on their own. If not, apply direct, firm pressure with a clean cloth, tissue, or piece of gauze and elevate the wound. If blood seeps through the dressing, put another dressing on top and keep applying pressure.

Clean the wound. Use clear water to rinse the wound. If dirt or debris remains in the wound, use tweezers cleaned with alcohol to remove the particles. Do not use stronger cleaning solutions such as hydrogen peroxide, iodine, or rubbing alcohol. They can irritate the wound.

Apply an antibiotic ointment. A thin layer of antibiotic ointment will help reduce infection, keep the wound clean and moist, and help reduce scarring.

Cover the wound. Once the bleeding has stopped and the wound is clean, cover with a bandage until a scab has formed. Bandages help keep the wound clean and prevent infection.

Change the dressing. Keep the dressing clean and dry. Change at least once a day.

The information presented here is not intended to be used for the diagnosis of a health problem or as a substitute for consulting a licensed medical professional. When using an Over-the-Counter medication please be sure to follow the package instructions. [Contact Health Services if you have any additional questions, concerns or to make an appointment.](#)