

Diabetes: How to Care for Wounds



Good wound care is very important if you have diabetes. Having diabetes makes it harder for wounds to heal. It also makes infection more likely because high blood sugar causes problems with your immune system. Your white blood cells kill bacteria, viruses, and fungi that cause infection. High blood sugar makes it hard for these cells to do their job.

If you have a wound, carefully follow your treatment plan and take good care of yourself at home. This will help your wound heal and help your body fight infection.

How often should you follow up with your doctor?

- Always go to scheduled appointments.
- Call your doctor right away anytime you have concerns about a wound.

Often it is hard to tell how serious a wound may be by just looking at it. Your doctor needs to do a thorough exam to see what treatment you need, or to see how well treatment is working.

What can help your wound heal?

- Carefully follow your doctor's treatment plan, including how to clean your wound. If you have any questions or problems, call your doctor right away.
- Keep your blood sugar levels within your target range.
- Do not smoke.
- Eat healthy foods. Your body needs good nutrition to heal.
- Prevent infection by keeping your wound clean.
- Do not use Betadine or hydrogen peroxide. They can injure and dry out healing tissue. Use a moist antibiotic ointment instead, if your doctor suggests one.
- With some wounds, it may be important not to walk or put weight on a wound. Ask your doctor.
- If you are on antibiotics, keep taking them and always take the amount prescribed. Stopping antibiotic treatment early can cause serious problems.

When should you call your doctor?

Call your doctor if you have new symptoms or changes or any signs of infection. For example, call if:

- You have pain, swelling, redness, or warmth around the area.
- You have red streaks extending from the area.
- You have pus draining from the area.
- You have a fever or chills.

You need immediate care for a problem such as infection. What may seem minor can quickly become very serious, especially if you have a foot injury. If you start to get an infection, your doctor may need to put you on antibiotics or do surgery to clean out your wound.

Call your doctor if you have any questions or any trouble following your treatment plan.