Laceration Care

A laceration is a cut in the skin. A laceration needs to be cleaned and closed. The time it takes for a cut to heal depends on how bad the cut is and where it is on the body. A cut may have bruising around it. A cut can cause scarring. A deep cut can cause harm to blood vessels, tendons, ligaments, nerves, and bone.

HOME CARE

- Wash your hands before taking off or putting on a new bandage. If others help you with the bandages, they should also wash their hands, too.
- Take off the old bandage at least once a day, or as told by your doctor. If the old bandage sticks to the cut, soak the bandage in warm water for a few minutes. Put the old bandage in a plastic bag. Throw it away.
- Look to see if the cut has redness or yellow fluid coming from it. This could be the start of an infection.
- Clean the cut and apply antibiotic cream or ointment and a bandage as told by your doctor.
- Only use medicines as told by your doctor.
- If the bandage gets wet, dirty, or has a bad smell, change it as soon as possible.
- Have the stitches (*sutures*), staples, or skin adhesive strips removed as told by your doctor.

YOU MIGHT NEED A TETANUS SHOT IF:

- You cannot remember when your or your child's last tetanus shot was.
- You or your child has never had a tetanus shot.
- The object that caused the wound was dirty.

GET HELP IF:

- There is more puffiness (*swelling*) around the cut than you expect.
- You notice something coming out of the cut, such as wood or glass.
- The cut splits open and bleeds.
- The cut breaks open after the stitches are removed.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- Yellow fluid (*pus*) is coming from the cut.
- You have a temperature by mouth above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**
- There is a red line on the skin coming from the cut.
- The cut is on the hand or foot, and you or your child cannot move his or her fingers or toes.
- Pain is not helped with medicine.
- You notice a bad smell coming from the cut or bandage.
- There is numbness or weakness around the cut.
- There are painful lumps near the cut or anywhere on the body.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch this condition.
- Will get help right away if you or your child is not doing well or gets worse.

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