Foreign Body

When the skin is cut or punctured and some object is left in the tissue under the skin, that object is called a "*foreign body*". A *foreign body* could be a wood splinter, a thorn, a sliver of metal, a shard of glass, a cactus needle or the tip of a pencil. In most instances, your caregiver will recommend that the foreign body be removed. If it is not removed, infection, abscess formation, an allergic reaction, chronic pain and disability can occur over time.

Sometimes, foreign bodies (particularly very small ones) can be difficult to locate. Your caregiver may recommend x-rays or ultrasound imaging to help find them. If removal is not successful, there may be a need to see a surgeon who might suggest further exploration in the operating room. Occasionally, tiny bits of metallic foreign material (such as shrapnel) are not removed, if it is felt that there would be no harm in leaving them untouched.

HOME CARE

- Rest the injured area and keep it elevated until all the pain and swelling are gone.
- You will need a tetanus vaccination if you have not had one in the last 5 years.
- Return to this facility, see your caregiver or follow-up as instructed in 2 days.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop increasing redness or swelling of the skin near the wound.
- You develop drainage of pus from the wound.
- You have persistent pain or loss of motion.
- You have red streaks extending above or below the wound location.

MAKE SURE YOU:

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

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