Laceration Care

A laceration is a cut or lesion that goes through all layers of the skin and into the tissue just beneath the skin.

RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS

Most lacerations heal fully. The healing time required varies depending on location. Complications of a laceration can include pain, bleeding, infection, *dehiscence* (splitting open or separation of the wound edges) and scar formation. The likelihood of complication depends on wound complexity, location, and on how the laceration occurred.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If you were given a dressing, you should change it at least once a day, or as instructed by your caregiver. If the bandage sticks, soak it off with a solution of hydrogen peroxide or soapy water.
- Twice a day, wash the area with soap and water and rinse with plain water to remove all soap. Pat (don't rub) dry with a clean towel. Look for signs of infection (see below).
- Re-apply prescribed creams or ointments as instructed. This will help prevent infection. This also helps keep the bandage from sticking. Telfa over the wound and under the dressing or wrap will also help keep the bandage from sticking.
- If the bandage becomes wet, dirty, or develops a foul smell, change it as soon as possible.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Have your sutures, staples, or steri strips removed as instructed by your caregiver. Steri strips will peel off from the outer edges toward the center and will eventually fall off. Report to your caregiver if the strips are falling off and the wound does not appear fully healed.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound.
- There is a red line that goes up your arm or leg.
- Pus is coming from wound.
- You develop an unexplained oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), or as your caregiver suggests.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.
- There is a breaking open of the wound (edges not staying together) before or after sutures have been removed.
- You notice something coming out of the wound such as wood or glass.
- The wound is on your hand or foot and you find that you are unable to properly move a finger or toe.
- There is severe swelling around the wound causing pain and numbness or a change in color in your arm, hand, leg, or foot.
- Pain is not controlled with medication.
- There is severe swelling around the wound site.
- The wound splits open and bleeding recurs.
- You experience worsening numbness, weakness, or loss of function of any joint around or beyond the wound.
- You develop painful lumps near the wound or on the skin anywhere on your body.

YOU MIGHT NEED A TETANUS SHOT NOW IF:

- You have no idea when you had the last one.
- You have never had a tetanus shot before.
- Your cut had dirt in it.

If you need a tetanus shot, ***and you decide not to get one***, there is a rare chance of getting tetanus. Sickness from tetanus can be serious. *If you got a tetanus shot, your arm may swell, get red and warm to the touch at the*

shot site. This is common and not a problem.

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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