Laceration, Old, Not Sutured

A laceration is a cut or lesion that goes through all layers of the skin and into the tissue just beneath the skin. Usually these are stitched up or held together with tape or glue shortly after an injury. However, if several or more hours have passed before getting care, too many germs (*bacteria*) get into the wound. Stitching it closed at this point brings the risk of infection. If your caregiver feels your laceration is too old, it is sometimes left open and dressed regularly to allow healing from the bottom layer up.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- You should change the dressing twice a day or as instructed by your caregiver. If the bandage or wound packing sticks, soak it off with soapy water. When you redress your wound, make sure that the dressing or packing goes all the way to the bottom of the wound. The top of the wound is kept open so it can heal from the bottom up. There is less chance for infection with this method.
- Twice a day, wash the area with soap and water to remove all the creams or ointments if used. Rinse off the soap. Pat dry with a clean towel. Look for signs of infection (see below).
- Re-apply creams or ointments if they were used to dress the wound. This also helps 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.

SEEK 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 102º F (38.9º C) or as directed.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.
- 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.
- There is a change in color in your arm, hand, leg, or foot.

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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