

Health: First Aid

Cuts and Wounds

Bleeding serves a useful purpose because it helps to clean out a wound. But too much bleeding can cause your body to go into shock. Some serious injuries can bleed very little. On the other hand, cuts on the head, face, and mouth may bleed a lot because there are a lot of blood vessels in those areas. Abdominal and chest wounds can be quite serious because internal organs may be damaged, which can cause internal bleeding and even shock and are considered an emergency. While waiting for medical care, give first aid treatment for shock. Have the injured person lie quietly with his or her feet elevated about 12 inches. Cover him or her with a blanket to maintain body warmth.

First Aid for Cuts and Wounds

- Help the person to remain calm. If the cut is large or bleeding heavily, have them lie down. If the wound is on an arm or leg, raise the limb above the heart to slow bleeding.
- Remove obvious debris from the wound, such as sticks or grass. If the object is embedded in the body, do NOT remove it.
- If the cut is small, wash it out with soap and water. Do NOT clean a large wound.
- After putting on clean latex gloves apply firm pressure to the wound with a folded cloth or bandage for about 10 minutes. Do not remove the bandage to look at the wound during this time, as it may begin bleeding again. If blood soaks through, add another cloth or bandage and continue holding pressure on the cut for an additional 10 minutes.
- When bleeding has stopped, tape a clean bandage over the cut.

Seek medical care for a cut or wound if:

- It's jagged or deep, or if it is a puncture wound.
- It's on the face
- It's the result of an animal bite
- There is dirt that won't come out after washing
- The bleeding will not stop

Type of wounds

- Abrasion – Scraping or scratching the surface of the skin.
- Laceration – Slicing or cut that may be deep, usually cutting through a vein or artery.
- Puncture – Produced by a pointed object that punctured the skin. High risk of infection do to poor bleeding and the skin cleaning the object as it is pulled from the body.
- Avulsion – Jagged tear of the flesh or removal or tearing away of the skin.

Poisons

Signs and symptoms of poisoning

- Burns or redness around the mouth and lips, from drinking certain poisons
- Breath that smells like chemicals, such as gasoline or paint thinner
- Burns, stains and odors on the person, on clothing, or on furniture, floor, rugs or other objects in the surrounding area
- Empty medication bottles or scattered pills
- Vomiting, difficulty breathing, sleepiness, confusion or other unexpected signs

Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately if the person is:

- Drowsy or unconscious
- Having difficulty breathing or has stopped breathing
- Uncontrollably restless or agitated
- Having seizures

What to do while waiting for help

- If the person has been exposed to poisonous fumes, such as carbon monoxide, get him or her into fresh air immediately.
- If the person swallowed the poison, remove anything remaining in the mouth.
- If the suspected poison is a household cleaner or other chemical, read the label and follow instructions for accidental poisoning. If the product is toxic, the label will likely advise you to call the poison center at 800-222-1222.
- Follow treatment directions that are given by the poison control center.
- If the poison spilled on the person's clothing, skin or eyes, remove the clothing. Flush the skin or eyes with cool or lukewarm water, such as by using a shower for 20 minutes or until help arrives.
- Make sure the person is breathing. If not, start CPR and rescue breathing.
- Take the poison container (or any pill bottles) with you to the hospital.

Don't give ipecac syrup or do anything to induce vomiting. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises discarding ipecac in the home, saying there's no good evidence of effectiveness and that it can do more harm than good.