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## **How Do Doctors Determine Whether a Skin Laceration Requires Stitches/Sutures?**

Skin sutures (or stitches) are used to help wounds heal by bringing together skin edges. Open wounds are hard to keep clean especially if they are deep. So, wound closure can prevent major bacterial infections from doing more damage to the body. Additionally, as the body heals it must produce a scar to close the wound. Sutures bring the edges of the skin together to minimize the amount of scar tissue the body must produce. This helps the body to heal faster and reduces cosmetic irregularities.

When treating a cut, medical professionals focus on cleanliness. The most commonly used cleaning solution is antibacterial soap and water as other chemicals are more dangerous and harmful to healing tissue. In extreme cases and in the hospital, where bacteria thrive, physicians may use a peroxide or iodine solutions to ensure that a deep wound is as clean as possible.

It is well known that the application of constant, gentle pressure to the wound helps stop bleeding. Clean, absorbent, materials are preferred because they keep dried blood close to the wound, helping it to produce a clot or scab. As blood soaks into the gauze or cloth, it signals the body to stop bleeding; doctors are trained to avoid removing bandages unless they have been soaked through completely and are wet with blood. Often doctors will simply apply a clean bandage over a soaked one to ensure that the dried blood remains close to the injury site.

Once the bleeding has stopped, a new, clean bandage can be applied to continue protecting the wound from bacteria.

### **Suture criteria frequently taught to medical experts:**

- 1) Wounds that are deeper than half an inch (1/2" in).
- 2) Wounds that lie over a joint or an area of skin that is frequently flexed or stretched.
- 3) Wounds that gape open or skin edges that are cannot easily be approximated.

### **Extreme circumstances requiring emergent attention:**

- 1) If the cut is the result of an animal or human bite it must be treated with antibiotics that can only be found at a hospital.
- 2) If the wound was produced by impalement, it must be treated with antibiotics that can only be found at a hospital.
- 3) If the wound is bleeding uncontrollably (5-10 minutes) or if blood is forcibly pulsating from the wound
- 4) If there is numbness in and around the cut nerves have been damaged.