

Lacerations (cuts)

The South Australian
Wound Management
Association
www.sawma.org.au



What a laceration (cut) is

A laceration is a type of wound usually caused by a sharp object cutting the skin. Lacerations can be shallow but sometimes they can be deep.

What a laceration looks like

A fresh laceration looks like a cut that is red, bleeding and painful wound.

How to help reduce the risk of lacerations

Be very careful when using kitchen knives, sharp kitchen graters and shredders, parcel cutting knives, razors, garden shears and any other sharp object.

Always wear gardening gloves when using garden shears.

Never use electric tools or handle iron sheets or other large, sharp objects without wearing protective gloves, shoes and other protective clothing.

If the laceration is large or bleeding profusely, use a clean towel to apply firm pressure to the wound for at least 10 minutes. Keep the lacerated part elevated if possible. Seek medical assistance immediately. Do not remove the towel. Only a health practitioner should remove the towel as bleeding may start again.

IF THE WOUND IS SQUIRTING BLOOD OR THERE IS PROFUSE BLEEDING THAT DOES NOT STOP AFTER 10 MINUTES, PHONE FOR AN AMBULANCE IMMEDIATELY –

Ph 000 (or 112 from a mobile phone if 000 does not work)

Only apply a tourniquet as a last resort – if bright red blood is squirting from the wound or profuse bleeding cannot be stopped. Use a thin cloth or belt about 5cm above the laceration and tie it tight enough to reduce the flow of blood. Call for an ambulance immediately. Only a health practitioner should remove a tourniquet.

How to care for a minor laceration

Some minor lacerations will need stitches (sutures). If the wound is gaping or deep seek advice from a doctor – even if the bleeding has stopped.

If the laceration is small or not bleeding profusely, apply firm pressure using a clean towel to the area until bleeding stops.

Carefully wash the wound well under running water.

Remove any dirt or debris from the wound with a clean towel. Do not use cotton balls. Pat the area dry very carefully.

Cover the wound with a non adherent dressing. Ask your pharmacist, doctor or health professional for advice on an appropriate dressing.

Change the dressing if it becomes wet, soiled or soaked with wound drainage.

When to seek advice from a doctor

If all the dirt or debris cannot be removed from the wound.

If the wound bleeds every time the dressing is changed.

If the wound becomes painful or inflamed and this does not settle down in a couple of days.

If the drainage from the wound becomes excessive, smelly or discoloured.

If the wound becomes black.

If the wound has not healed in four weeks or if the wound becomes larger.

For any other concerns regarding the wound.

This information is intended as a general guide only and does not replace the advice of a trained health professional.

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