

PUNCTURE WOUNDS

The information provided in this safety topic is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice or formal first aid training.

A **puncture wound** from a small object may not cause much bleeding, but these wounds can be deep and are at greater risk of infection. First aid for smaller puncture wounds is similar to first aid care for minor cuts and scrapes. To take care of a puncture wound:

1. **Wash your hands.** This helps avoid infection. If you are assisting someone else with first aid, wear disposable gloves and protective eyewear.
2. **Stop the bleeding.** Apply gentle pressure with a clean bandage or cloth.
3. **Clean the wound.** Rinse the wound with clear water for 5-10 minutes. A doctor should be seen if all the debris cannot be removed.
4. **Apply an antibiotic** or ointment, in a thin layer, over the wound.
5. **Cover the wound.** Apply a bandage, rolled gauze or gauze held in place with paper tape. Covering the wound keeps it clean.

After first aid care is provided, the dressing should be changed at least once a day and the injury should be monitored for signs of infection, like redness, warmth, swelling, pain, fever or drainage.

Seek immediate or emergency medical care if the wound is:

- still bleeding after a few minutes of direct pressure
- from an animal bite
- deep and dirty
- caused by a metal object
- over a joint and could be deep
- to the head neck, scrotum, chest, or abdomen and could be deep



Using PPE is important to minimize the risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens. If there is blood or bodily fluids, always wear gloves and protective eyewear when giving first aid care.

- After providing any type of first aid, wash your hands immediately.
- All surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned and decontaminated after exposure to blood or bodily fluids.

Discussion

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Do you know where to find first aid supplies quickly, including disposable gloves?

What is the best way to clean up and decontaminate an area after a bleeding incident?