

## WOUNDS & BLEEDING - INFORMATION

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A wound is any break in the soft tissues of the body. It usually results in bleeding and may allow germs to enter the body. Bleeding is the escape of blood from the blood vessels into surrounding tissues, body cavities or out of the body. The aim in the care of wounds is to stop the bleeding and prevent infection. Loss of blood / body fluid and infection are the two primary concerns of wound care.

**Open wound** - there is a break in the outer layer of the skin that results in bleeding and may permit germs to enter the body, causing infection.

**Closed wound** - there is no break in the outer layer of skin so there is no external bleeding (but there will be internal bleeding which may be severe) and the risk of infection is low.

**Bleeding** is the escape of blood from the blood vessels. Bleeding is either arterial which is bleeding from the arteries, or venous, which is bleeding from the veins.

**Arterial bleeding** - the blood is bright red and spurts with each heartbeat-arterial bleeding is serious and often hard to control

**Venous bleeding** - the blood is dark red and flows more steadily-it is easier to stop than arterial bleeding.

- Contusions or bruises** Closed wounds usually caused by a fall or a blow from something blunt. The tissues under the skin are damaged and bleed into surrounding tissues, causing discoloration due to no break in the skin, there is little chance of infection. A bruise may be a sign of a deeper, more serious injury or illness.
- Abrasions or scrapes** Open wounds where the outer layer of skin and the tiny underlying blood vessels are exposed, but the deeper layer of the skin is still intact. Due to the skin being scraped across a hard surface (rug or gravel burns, road rash). They do not bleed very much but can be very painful. The risk of infection from dirt and other particles that may be in the wound is high.
- Incisions** Clean cuts in soft tissue caused by something sharp such as a knife. These wounds may not be as dirty as abrasions, but they may contain fragments of glass or other material and bleed freely. A minor variation with no blood would be the paper cut, where there may be germs in the upper layer of the skin without bleeding.
- Lacerations** Tears in the skin and underlying tissue. The edges of the wound are jagged and irregular, and dirt is likely to be present, increasing the risk of infection. Are often caused by machinery, barbed wire or the claws of an animal. Blood escapes from this wound slowly compared to an incision wound.
- Puncture wounds** Open wounds caused by blunt or pointed instruments or objects, such as knives, nails, bullets, or an animal/insect bite. The wound may have a small opening, but often penetrates deep into the tissue. There may be contamination deep in the wound and internal organs may be damaged.
- Avulsion & Amputations** Injuries that leave a piece of skin or other tissues either partially or completely torn away from the body. Amputations involve partial or complete loss of a body part and are usually caused by machinery or cutting tools.

**Signs and symptoms of bleeding** - the most obvious sign of external bleeding is blood. You do not see blood with internal bleeding.

**Severe blood loss** will result in the following signs and symptoms of shock:

- Pale, cold and clammy skin
- Rapid pulse, gradually becoming weaker
- Faintness, dizziness, thirst and nausea
- Restlessness and apprehension
- Shallow breathing, yawning, sighing and gasping for air

**Recognizing internal bleeding:**

- The casualty received a severe blow or a penetrating injury to the chest, neck, abdomen or groin
- There are major limb fractures such as a fractured upper leg or pelvis

**Specific signs of internal bleeding is when blood is:**

- Coming from the ear canal or the nose, or it may appear as a bloodshot eye or black eye (bleeding inside the head)
- Coughed up and looks bright red and frothy (bleeding into the lungs)
- Seen in vomitus either as bright red, or brown like coffee grounds
- Seen in the stools, and looks either black and tarry (bleeding into the upper bowel), or its normal red colour (bleeding into the lower bowel).
- Seen in the urine as a red or smoky brown colour (bleeding into the urinary tract).

**Wound infection** can be recognized when a wound becomes more painful, becomes red and perhaps swollen, feels warmer than the surrounding area and shows the presence of pus (whitish fluid).