

Wound Care for Scrapes and Scratches

What is a scrape or scratch?

Scrapes and scratches are wounds to the first few layers of skin. They are usually not deep, but they can cover large areas of skin.

What is the cause?

Most scrapes and scratches happen:

- During a fall or an accident
- By running into or getting hit with something sharp, rough, or hard
- While working with something sharp, rough, or jagged
- By getting scratched by an animal

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- A break in the skin, or loss of skin
- Pain
- Redness
- Sometimes bleeding

How is it treated?

The treatment of a wound depends on what caused the wound, where it is, and the size and shape. You can usually take care of a scrape or a scratch yourself. A wound heals more quickly, and with less risk of infection and scarring, when the wound is kept clean and the edges are held close together as it heals.

How can I take care of myself?

If you have a scrape or a scratch:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 15 seconds before you touch the area.
- Clean the wound as well as possible with mild soap and water. Remove any bits of dirt, small pieces of rock, or other debris that you can easily see, but do not poke or pick at the wound.
- If it's bleeding, put pressure on it with a bandage or clean cloth until the bleeding stops, which may take up to 20 minutes.
- Keep the wound and the area around it clean and dry until it scabs over. You may need to put a bandage over the area to keep it clean and dry. Change the bandage every day. Change the bandage more often if it gets dirty or wet.
- To prevent infection in a minor wound, you may use a nonprescription antibiotic ointment. Read the labels and buy products that have only the

ingredients that you need and are not allergic to. If you are not sure which medicine is best for your wound, ask your pharmacist.

- Don't take aspirin if your wound is bleeding. If needed, take nonprescription pain medicine, such as acetaminophen. Read the label and take as directed. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen or naproxen may cause stomach bleeding and other problems. These risks increase with age. Unless recommended by your healthcare provider, don't take an NSAID for more than 10 days.
- As the wound heals, some swelling, redness, and pain are normal.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have:
 - Symptoms of infection, which include new or worse redness, swelling, pain, warmth, or drainage in the area of the wound
 - New bleeding from the wound that won't stop
 - Pain that is increasing or not getting better with pain medicine
 - Fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, or muscle aches
 - You have a wound caused by a dirty object or that has dirt in it and you have not had a tetanus shot in the last 5 years
 - Any questions about caring for the wound

Developed by RelayHealth.

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