

Wound Infection

Definition

- A break in the skin (a wound) shows signs of infection
- Signs of infection include pus, spreading redness, increased pain or swelling, and fever
- Includes infected cuts, scrapes, sutured wounds, puncture wounds and animal bites
- Most dirty wounds become infected 24 to 72 hours later

Health Information

Symptoms

- Pus or cloudy fluid is draining from the wound
- A pimple or yellow crust has formed on the wound
- The scab has increased in size
- Increasing redness occurs around the wound
- A red streak is spreading from the wound toward the heart
- The wound has become very tender
- Pain or swelling is increasing 48 hours after the wound occurred
- The lymph node draining that area of skin may become large and tender
- A fever occurs
- The wound hasn't healed within 10 days after the injury

Cause

- The skin protects the body from infection.
- Once the skin is broken, bacteria can get inside and start an infection.

Prevention

- Wash any cuts or wounds right away. Then keep them clean.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Some pink or red skin on the edge of the wound is normal.
- If the redness spreads or pain increases, the wound is probably infected.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Warm Soaks or Warm Wet Cloth:

- For any redness or other signs of early infection, use heat.
- For open cuts or scrapes, soak it in warm water. You can also put a warm wet cloth on the wound. Do this for 10 minutes 3 times per day. Use a warm saltwater solution. You can make your own. Put 2 teaspoons (10 ml) of table salt in a quart (liter) of warm water.
- For closed or sutured cuts, put a heating pad on the wound. You can also use a warm, moist washcloth. Do this for 10 minutes 3 times per day.
- Cautions for sutured wounds. Do not put anything wet on the wound for first 24 hours. After 24 hours, can take brief showers. Never soak the wound before all sutures are removed.

3. **Antibiotic Ointment:**
 - Use an antibiotic ointment such as Polysporin.
 - No prescription is needed.
 - Put it on the wound 3 times a day.
 - If the area could become dirty, cover with a Band-Aid.
4. **Antibiotics by Mouth:**
 - If the wound infection is more than mild, you need a prescription antibiotic.
 - The antibiotic will kill the bacteria that are causing the wound infection.
 - Give the antibiotic as directed.
 - Try not to forget any of the doses.
5. **Pain Medicine:**
 - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
6. **Fever:**
 - For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
 - For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.
7. **What to Expect:**
 - Wound pain and swelling normally peak on day 2.
 - On antibiotic, fever should be gone in 1-2 days. Redness should be less in 3 days.
 - Complete healing should occur by 10 days.
8. **Return to School:**
 - For true wound infections, your child can return after the fever is gone. Your child should also be taking an antibiotic by mouth for 24 hours.
 - For minor redness around the wound, your child does not need to stay home.

Call Your Doctor If

- Wound becomes more painful
- Redness starts to spread
- New fever occurs
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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