



Student Health Center

UNC Wilmington

INSTRUCTION SHEET: ABRASIONS

The Student Health Provider has treated you today for abrasions of the skin.

Abrasions are superficial (not deep) wounds; only the outer layers of skin are involved. As with any break in the skin, infection is possible. Infection in abrasions, however, is less common than with deeper wounds: Bacteria can't hide and multiply as easily.

Abrasions are typically painful, since nerve endings in the skin are exposed. If abrasions are dirty, they should be scrubbed to remove as much dirt and debris as possible. Scrubbing is uncomfortable, but dirt and debris left in a wound increase the chance of infection.

Normally, abrasions heal in one to two weeks. Healing time depends on several factors, including the size and depth of the wound, and the age and health of the patient.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR ABRASIONS:

- 1- Clean the abrasions daily with liquid hand soap and water, or a solution of one-half hydrogen peroxide and one-half water. Wound cleaning can be done in the shower or bathtub. Old dressings can be soaked to remove them more easily.
- 2- After cleaning, re-dress the wound. Apply over-the-counter antibacterial ointment and cover the wound with a gauze dressing. You can also leave the abrasions open to air for a few hours before applying the new dressing -- do so only if you will not be active or doing anything that might get the wound dirty.
- 3- When changing the dressing, inspect the abrasions for signs of infection: pus on the wound, increasing redness/swelling/warmth around the wound, or red streaks spreading from the wound. If you suspect infection is present, return promptly to the Student Health Center or see your personal/referral doctor.
- 4- Over-the-counter pain medications can help relieve the discomfort associated with abrasions. Acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preferences. Elevating wounds (above the level of your heart) also helps minimize pain and swelling.