

# Getting the moisture balance of your wound just right

Wounds produce wound fluid as part of the normal healing process. Wounds heal best in a moist environment, but your wound can have too much of a good thing. Here we explain all about moist wound healing and how to make sure you are getting the moisture balance right.



**T**he production of wound fluid (also known as wound exudate), is a normal and essential part of wound healing. It is produced in wounds that are healing naturally for a very good reason.

Exudate bathes the wound with just the right amount of fluid to keep it moist and supplies it with everything it needs to heal, such as nutrients and wound healing cells, including those needed to clean the wound and fight infection. As everything in the exudate is there in the right amount and contains the right quantity of wound healing cells, it keeps the wound moist

and enables healing to take place. Moist wound healing has been shown to increase the speed of healing compared to wounds that are exposed to air and allowed to dry out.

## Too much moisture

However, if your wound is exposed to too much exudate, you will start to see the effects on your wound, your dressing, your skin and how you feel. Here is what you should look out for.

## Your dressing

A sure sign your wound is producing

a lot of exudate is if your dressing becomes soggy and the exudate starts to leak out of the sides. A dressing is needed that is able to contain the exudate for a reasonable period of time. Ask your healthcare professional to change the type of dressing if it is not managing your wound fluid very well.

### Your skin

Sometimes too much exudate can cause damage to the skin around the wound, causing the wound to enlarge and not look as healthy. When exudate sits on the skin it can become red and angry or white and 'boggy' just like when you have been in the bath too long. Ask a healthcare professional to check your skin around the wound and advise on a barrier cream to protect it if this is the case.

### An underlying condition


An underlying condition may be responsible for the fluid being produced. For example, venous disease can result in fluid collecting in the lower limb and

leaking through your wound. Improving the underlying cause can help to improve the amount of fluid present.

### How you feel

If you are producing too much exudate and the dressing is leaking, this may make you feel low in mood, cause you pain and distress and may make you miss out on your usual activities. Ask a healthcare professional to check your wound and advise on what can be done to control the exudate.

### Your diet

Exudate is rich in protein, so, when you produce a large amount of exudate you may lose a lot of protein. This protein, essential for growth and repair of body tissues, may need replacing to prevent a shortage (deficiency). Good food sources of protein are meat, fish, dairy products, eggs, nuts and soya, beans, peas and lentils. If you are losing a lot of exudate, you may be referred to a dietitian for ways to increase your protein intake. 



*Keith Harding, Professor Emeritus, Cardiff University, comments:*

‘There is always a reason why your wound is producing wound fluid. It is important that you get your wound assessed so that the reasons can be identified, and a solution provided. Don’t just put up with it, as it is likely to get worse without treatment.’

# Why the fluid from chronic wounds can cause harm

Wound fluid, also known as exudate, contains everything a wound needs to heal. In chronic wounds, however, the composition of the fluid can become unbalanced, and it can do more harm than good. Here we explain what to do.

Chronic wounds, such as leg ulcers, diabetes-related foot ulcers and pressure ulcers, can produce wound fluid that can cause harm, rather than healing.

Usually, wound fluid contains a balance of proteins and cells that help the wound to heal, however, in chronic wounds that are older than a few weeks or

it, instead of helping it to heal. Unless this situation is reversed, the wound will often not heal, and in some cases it may become bigger due to the damage caused by the chronic wound fluid.

Dressings can be used to absorb and hold the chronic wound exudate away from the skin and wound.

months this balance is sent into disarray and the cells and proteins begin to damage the tissues in the wound and the skin surrounding

Your clinician should recommend a dressing as part of a plan to kick-start your healing.

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