

Your wound questions answered

Here we provide answers to some commonly encountered wound problems. If you have a question, please write to us via www.inthis-together.co.uk and we will try to help.

Q. How soon should I expect my wound to heal?

A. This very much depends on the type of wound you have and any underlying medical conditions present that may affect your ability to heal. Most small acute wounds, such as cuts and scratches, will start to heal uneventfully in a few days. Conversely, a diabetes-related foot ulcer may take several months to heal as the underlying diabetes may need to be managed and blood sugar levels optimised before there is an effect on wound healing.

Healing will also depend on the size of the wound, with larger wounds taking longer than small wounds as there is less surface area for new skin to cover. Wound healing is also influenced by lifestyle choices, such as smoking, nutrition and your level of physical activity.

Q. Is it ok to wash my wound when I shower?

A. If your healthcare professional is happy for you to wash your wound then it is ok to go ahead. Wound cleansing is key for your personal hygiene and well being and can help to keep your wound and surrounding skin healthy and free of infection.

You can either wash your wound when you are in the shower, or separately. If you are doing it separately, wash your hands well and dry them. Clean the wound and skin around the wound by rinsing with tap water. Pat the area dry with a gauze swap or clean towel and put on a plaster or sterile dressing. However, don't clean your wound if you are told not to by your nurse or doctor.

The advice given here is for commonly encountered problems and is in no way prescriptive. If you are concerned or unsure in anyway, please seek expert advice. It is advisable to undergo a thorough clinical assessment to make treatment choices that are suitable for you.

Q. Shall I leave my wound uncovered so that it forms a scab?

A. Ideally you should cover your wound to protect it from further damage and infection. It has been shown that wounds that are left to dry out and form a scab take longer to heal than those that are protected and kept moist and covered by a dressing. You can read more about moist wound healing on pages 15–17.

Q. My adhesive dressing is sticking and causing small cuts and redness on removal. What should I do?

A. Your dressing shouldn't be causing any damage to the skin around the wound, and this damage puts you at risk of your wound becoming bigger.

You should consider changing your dressing to a gentle adhesive dressing, such as one

containing silicone. You can speak to your healthcare professional about the dressing options available and how to protect your skin from further damage.

In the meantime, you may want to increase the size of your new gentle dressing so that the damage from your old dressing is not irritated and gets some time to heal, along with your wound.

Q. I had a wound infection and now I feel ill and my leg is red and very painful. What should I do?

A. Wound infection can spread to the deep tissues under the skin (cellulitis). As you already had a wound infection, you should seek immediate medical help so that you can begin antibiotic therapy right away. 

