



Wound Care Tips for caregivers

by Josie Padro

For many of us, the only wound care experience we've had is applying a plaster to a skinned knee. Often, however, wound care can become one of the tasks we perform as caregivers. If the wound is large or the dressing is complicated, a home care nurse will probably visit for dressing changes. The nurse will provide you with information about positioning – whether the limb should be elevated, for example – and what to do should the dressing come undone or fall off. While the nurse is in your home or while you are in your doctor's office, take the opportunity to ask questions and check your understanding. You can also request written information that you can refer to if needed.

If you will be changing the dressing yourself, make sure you do a trial run under supervision of the nurse, so that you will feel confident that you're doing it correctly. More recently a whole new generation of wound care products have arrived on store shelves. Many are designed to create a barrier that keeps the wound clean and allows it to stay moist, which has been found to allow more rapid wound healing. If you are caring for someone who has such a dressing, make sure you know when it should be changed, and check that it's staying in place. As with any dressing, watch for signs of infection. Some signs of infection include increased pain, a yellow or greenish foul-smelling drainage, redness at the edges of the wound that seems to be spreading, red streaks radiating away from the wound. If any of these signs appear notify your physician as soon as possible. Someone who is developing a wound infection may not have an elevated temperature until the infection is quite advanced, so it's best not to wait until a fever develops.

Because nutrition plays an important part of the body's ability to heal, the person may require more calories or a higher amount of certain nutrients, including protein and Vitamin C. To find out more specific information ask for a referral to a community health dietician or ask to speak to one at HealthLink BC, 811.