

How wounds heal

Wound healing is a complex process. How a wound heals depends on the type of injury, its depth, size, location and each person's individual circumstances. Initially a clot/scab, using specialised blood cells and proteins, is formed to protect the wound from blood loss and infection. Then the protein fibre collagen starts to grow in the wound along with new skin cells and new capillaries. Chronic wounds take longer to heal as there has been more tissue damage and they heal from the bottom of the wound to the top.



Get the right advice

When you seek advice or treatment for a wound that won't heal you are entitled to receive the best quality care. You should talk to your GP if you are concerned about a wound that isn't healing. In some instances your doctor might feel your wound needs specialist advice and they may refer you to:

- Specialist wound clinics
- Hospital wound management clinics
- Hospital wound management specialist nurses
- Community nursing services (some have specialist wound management nurses)
- Podiatrists.

For more information about wounds
and wound healing visit

woundaware.com.au

Supported by



Be Wound Aware Patient Information



What is a wound?

A wound is any damage or break in the surface of the skin. Wounds can be accidental, surgical or occur because of underlying disease (such as diabetes or vascular disease) or changes to the skin that occur with ageing.

What are chronic wounds?

Acute wounds usually heal quickly and without complication. Chronic wounds are those that take more than three months to heal or are recurring (i.e. almost or completely heal and then come back) but they can heal with proper treatment.

Types of chronic wounds

There are some chronic wounds that occur due to underlying medical conditions. Some skin conditions may also develop into a wound. Some examples of common chronic wounds are:

- Bed sores – or pressure injuries can range from small superficial wounds to large deep wounds the depth of which may extend down to bone.
- Diabetic related foot disease is a complication of diabetes. If not treated (eg by a podiatrist) they can lead to amputation.
- Leg ulcers: A leg ulcer is a wound between the knee and ankle joint that is slow to heal because of problems with the veins in the leg.

Risk factors for chronic wounds

While anyone can get a chronic wound there are people who are at greater risk of chronic wounds or wounds that are hard to heal. These include:

- People who are elderly or have poor mobility
- People with diabetes
- People with cardiovascular diseases
- People with renal disease
- People who are obese.



What are the signs a wound isn't healing?

If you develop any of the following signs, make an appointment to see your doctor or health care practitioner:

- The area around the wound becomes red, swollen and hot
- The wound becomes painful
- Fluid from the wound becomes discoloured, thick or excessive

- The wound has not noticeably decreased in size over 4-6 weeks (even a small wound)
- The wound bleeds regularly or profusely
- The wound becomes black or yellow
- You feel unwell or develop a temperature.

If you develop any of the following signs don't delay, make an appointment to see your doctor, health care practitioner or local hospital emergency department.



Pain and heat

Wounds that are red, swollen, hot to touch and very painful



Odour

Wounds with a strange or unpleasant smell



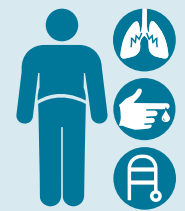
Excess Fluid

Wounds that have a thick, yellowish fluid



Slow healing

Wounds taking longer than a month to heal



Chronic Disease and ageing

People over 65 years and/or with chronic diseases such as diabetes, are more at risk of wound complications