

HOW AWARE OF WOUNDS ARE YOU?

It might seem like a simple question to answer, but with 2019 Wound Awareness Week upon us, do you know what a wound is?

Wounds Australia, the nation's peak body for wound care and treatment, wants to make sure you do.

At its simplest, a wound is any damage or break in the surface of the skin. Wounds can:

- be accidental, for example burns, abrasions, paper cuts or skin tears
- be surgical, such as an incision to remove a diseased appendix
- be caused by underlying disease, like diabetic and vascular ulcers
- develop from some skin conditions such as eczema or psoriasis may also develop into a wound.

Wounds generally fall into either the 'acute' or 'chronic' categories.

While an acute wound usually heals quickly and without complications, chronic wounds are far more concerning. They can debilitate people and ruin lives, while costing the healthcare Budget billions of dollars.

That's why Wounds Australia holds Wound Awareness Week. You need to know the warning signs and understand treatment is available.

Chronic wounds

Chronic wounds have not progressed through the stages of healing normally. They heal at a much slower rate, only partially heal or reoccur after partial or complete healing. These chronic wounds are almost always associated with underlying chronic diseases that affect blood supply or how the cells function at the wound site.

Wounds that take a long time to heal need special care. It is important to not only treat the wound but also diagnose and address the underlying condition causing the wound.

There are several types of wounds that account for the majority of chronic wounds. These are:

- Pressure injuries

Also known as bed sores, pressure sores or decubitus ulcers. These generally occur in people who have limited mobility due to illness and/or frailty and are unable to regularly move part or all of their body to a different position. They can extend down to bone.

- Diabetic ulcers

These ulcers generally begin on the feet because of circulation problems caused by diabetes. A lack of feeling might prevent people from being alerted to their seriousness, leading to lower leg amputation.

- Leg ulcers

A wound between the knee and ankle joint can be slow to heal because of circulation problems, especially in older people. People with some form of heart disease are also at greater risk of leg ulcers.

While chronic wounds can be complex and complicated, treatment is always available.

That's why you should use Wound Awareness Week to talk about wounds with your healthcare specialist. And check in on your older relatives while you're at it.

More information on Wounds Australia is at www.woundsaustralia.com.au

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