



What are Chronic Wounds?

Infosheet

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.

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.

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. For example, health conditions, medications and lifestyle factors impact on wound healing.

How long should it take for a wound to heal?

As we are all different and wounds can be different, it is difficult to place an exact time frame on wound healing. In general, a wound should progressively improve in appearance and decrease in size each week it is present. Naturally, a large, deep wound will take longer to heal than a small, shallow wound. Health practitioners can assist in healing your wound. However, it is your body that does the healing itself. The following are things you can do to assist your wound to heal;

- Stop or reduce smoking.
- Drink plenty of fluid (but avoid too much caffeine or alcohol).
- Eat foods rich in protein (including meat, fish, nuts, low fat dairy products, legumes).
- Avoid removing dressings or treatments applied by a health practitioner unless you are instructed to do so.
- Avoid exposing your wound to the air.
- Avoid bathing your wound in the sea.

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

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. In some instances your doctor or health practitioner might need to refer you to another practitioner for further investigations, tests or specialist treatment. The following providers may offer specialist wound management services or supply further information regarding wound management services:

- General Practitioners
- Specialist wound clinics
- Hospital wound management clinics
- Hospital wound management specialist nurses
- Community nursing services (some have specialist wound management nurses)
- District nursing services
- Domiciliary services
- Residential and/or aged care nursing services
- Podiatrists

WOUND AWARENESS WEEK

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