



Caring for your Wound Dressing at Home Tips and Tricks

The dressing that has been put in place to cover your wound is there to protect the wound and help it heal. Most wounds need a warm and moist environment to promote healing and so keeping the dressing intact and undisturbed is really important. Dressings are designed to be left in place for many days, so looking after your dressing is something you can do to help your wound's healing process.

Do:

Complete a daily visual check to check:

- That the dressing looks intact and there is no leakage
- That the skin surrounding the dressing is unchanged in colour and doesn't feel hot

Don't:

- Be tempted to remove the dressing to inspect the wound
- Scratch or pick at the skin surrounding the dressing
- Use emollient cream at the very edges of the dressing

When **showering**, always ensure that the dressing is showerproof and avoid soap based products or shampoo coming into direct contact with the dressing. If frequent showering is preferred try and use a protective covering over the dressing if possible.

If your **dressing becomes loose**, use tape or a light bandage to secure it in place until a healthcare professional can review it.

What else can I do?

Keep your fluid intake high, drinking as much as you can.

Maintain a healthy diet and eat nutritious meals as recommended by your healthcare professional.

Keep your circulation going. Change position regularly in your bed/chair and exercise as instructed by your healthcare professional.

Rest and elevate if this has been advised for leg wounds.

This is intended as a general guide. Patients should always follow the advice given by their healthcare professional. Patients wishing to use this guide should discuss with their healthcare professional first.

Tips and Reminders for Changing Your Dressing

If you have been prescribed spare dressings and your healthcare professional has indicated that you can change your own or someone else's wound dressing, please remember these tips:

1. **Wash your hands** thoroughly before you begin. **Clean your work surface** with sanitiser wipes or warm water and detergent.
 2. **Prepare all necessary materials** (e.g. cleanser to clean the wound, such as saline solution, your new sterile dressing, bandage and tape, disposable/sterile gloves, scissors and a plastic bag to dispose the old dressing in). Wash your hands.
 3. **Protect the wound area** and surrounding furniture. Use a clean towel or piece of linen to place under the wound area and wash this after use. Wear disposable gloves where possible.
 4. When **removing the old (dirty) dressing**, if the dressing is stuck, gently ease away from the wound and avoid a fast ripping movement. You may find it helps to gently irrigate the edges of the dressing and/or wet the bandage. Dispose of the dressing in a bag and keep it away from the new 'sterile' dressing. Ideally work with two separate trays to **avoid cross contamination**.
 5. If you have clean/sterile gloves put these on. When cleansing the wound always **follow guidance given by your healthcare professional** and avoid use of any standard household soaps etc... Use only products prescribed and avoid the use of cotton wool which can shed fibres into the wound. Clean from the centre outwards.
 6. **Assess your wound** while the wound is uncovered and **see if there are any signs of infection** (e.g. increased exudate, pain, odour, heat and redness). If infection is evident contact your healthcare professional immediately.
 7. Having cleansed the wound and washed your hands thoroughly, open the new dressing onto a clean surface. **To apply the new dressing** follow the Instructions for Use with the dressing, which typically outlines the following:
 - Ensure the surrounding skin is totally dry
 - Remove the backing paper at one side of the dressing and place accurately over the wound
 - Position and stick to the surrounding skin at one side
 - Gently remove the second part of backing paper and smooth over the rest of the wound
 - Gently massage the border of the dressing to ensure it is firmly in place
 - Wash your hands again
- If your dressing **doesn't have an adhesive edge** follow guidance given from your healthcare professional regarding holding the dressing in place. Non-adhesive dressings typically require a top dressing or bandage.
8. Finally, **keep the dressing clean and dry between changes** and remember that keeping a wound under a sterilised dressing will promote healthier, faster healing. Monitor the wound dressing and if it becomes soiled with blood, drainage, dirt or becomes wet change it.

When to contact your Healthcare Professional

- If the wound becomes suddenly more painful
- If the wound feels hot or itchy
- If the dressing starts to become loose or leak
- If the skin surrounding the wound dressing suddenly becomes red or inflamed
- If you detect a new unpleasant odour coming from the wound
- If the wound is getting bigger
- If you feel generally unwell