

# VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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## **Wounds - Amputation of parts**

The initial treatment of avulsions and amputation of body parts is probably a topic that you would not want to discuss. However, I feel it is part of first aid and believe me it happens often so read on. Let me begin with a simple avulsion.

Most commonly a person scrapes their leg against a sharp object and a big piece of skin ends up nearly falling off. It is attached by just a small corner. It is bleeding. Try to put the skin back where it came from in about the same position. It does not have to be exact. Put some pressure on it but just on the injured area. Use about 1 or 2 pounds of pressure, just enough to slow or stop the bleeding. A tourniquet should not be used in this situation. Do not put any alcohol, peroxide or antiseptic ointment on the area. These can only make matters worse. If you feel that you want to clean it use only mild soap and water, nothing else. Cover with a dry dressing and get medical attention.

Finger tip injuries are frequent. A piece of flesh gets cut off by the table saw or the child gets a part of their finger pinched off when the door or window is closed. Everybody knows to save the part but how is this done? Wrap the part in a gauze or clean washcloth. It should be clean but does not have to be sterile. The wrap should be damp with water or normal saline solution. It should only be damp, not soaking wet. Then place the wrap into a plastic sandwich bag. Put this in a container with a few ice cubes. The biggest mistake people make is to put the piece on ice. This will cause frostbite and ruin the part. It will not be usable for reattachment. The tissue should be slightly cooled, not cold or frozen.

This method of storage and transportation is good for many hours. There is no reason to be in a big rush to get to a medical facility. Be safe. Many times, especially in younger people these parts may be reattached. Other times this is not possible. The examination of the injury, the injured part and the patient in general will all be important in the decision making process.

It is important to save all injured parts as they may be useful. Sometimes an injured finger part may not be usable to reattach but may still be useful. Portions of the injured part may be used to help fix another injured area. The finger cannot be put back on but the skin from that finger could be used to skin graft the other finger that was injured but still attached.

I wrote this article because these injuries are common and so often the injured part is mistreated. Our efforts to fix things are then diminished. Most people treat wounds improperly. I hope that reading this column educates people to new and better wound care. This is important to all ages and walks of life.

**The above represents the opinion of A. E. Haas, M.D.  
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**Just call us directly. No referral needed unless required by your insurance company**

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