

VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

A.E. HAAS, M.D.

Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery

Gardening injuries

Do not trim palm or citrus trees. I wish I had a nickel for every person I treated for an infection they got while trimming these Florida trees. Some of the thorns are so big and strong they have gone through shoes when stepped upon. As it turns out some of the most unusual bacteria reside on the foliage. It is important for us doctors to ask how a patient was injured. Was it on a fence in a cow pasture, a prick from a palm tree or a cat bite? The infections from each of these come from different bacteria.

The doctor must give different antibiotics for different bacteria. That is one reason we get a culture of the wound. We do better if we know exactly what is causing the infection. The lab can also tell us the specific antibiotics to use. For more difficult infections there are doctors who specialize in the administration of antibiotics. They are called infectious disease doctors and are associated with many wound care centers.

The simple infections are usually treated by the family doctor. Sometimes after the antibiotics are stopped the infection returns. A common cause for this is that a piece of the thorn, a splinter is still in there. Usually X-Rays do not show wood or other plant like materials. Surgery may be indicated to remove the "foreign body". Since most of these retained foreign bodies are in hand wounds a hand specialist should be sought. These include reconstructive plastic surgeons and orthopedists.

What about first aid? Most wound care specialists do not recommend the use of peroxide, rubbing alcohol or iodine for initial treatment. We generally recommend that the injured part be washed with soap and water then be covered with a dry gauze bandage. Please do not put the injured part in your mouth and suck on it. The mouth is the dirtiest location in the world I tell my patients. Also, particularly for puncture wounds a tetanus shot may be needed. Seek medical attention.

A small puncture wound from a plant may turn into a really big problem. This is especially true for people as diabetics. I believe that diabetics should not do yard work in Florida. The risk of injury and a very bad infection is just too high. Prevention is the name of the game!

**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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