

# VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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*Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery*

## **Wounds - How they heal**

Actually I would like to review some of the misconceptions I have heard about wound healing. My favorite is “expose the wound to the air so it can get more oxygen.” In my experience most patients get all sorts of wound care advice from helpful, well meaning friends. Nearly all the things I hear are in fact incorrect. Sometimes I tell patients that whatever they hear from others is most certainly incorrect and may even be harmful. This includes information they receive from retired nurse or doctor neighbors as well. Yes, times have changed and so has the treatment of wounds. That is why wound care is becoming a specialty in itself. There is simply too much a doctor must know and keep up with these days.

Oxygen can only help a wound heal when it is brought to the area by the blood stream. No amount of oxygen applied to the surface of a wound will make it heal. If one was to blow 100% oxygen from a breathing tank over an open wound it can only make it worse because it would cause wound desiccation. The wound would dry. Human tissues die when they dry.

Good blood circulation is the most important thing regarding wound healing. Not only is oxygen brought to the area but also many nutrients are supplied. Also, waste and byproducts of metabolism are removed by good circulation. If the venous circulation is impaired blood cannot get back to the heart. Legs with veins that do not work properly end up brown and purple in color. This is because products of metabolism cannot be carried away. They sort of stain and “poison” the tissues.

Patients with non-healing leg wounds often think that walking and exercises will increase circulation and make the wound heal. False. Usually rest and leg elevation is what that leg needs. Some patients apply heat, some apply cold to wounds in an effort to help them heal. My feeling that is the body functions best at 98.6 degrees and that these extremes of temperature will not help and may actually worsen the situation.

Now I must admit that my discussion is almost black and white, right or wrong but there is in fact some truth to all “wife’s tales.” And the words “never” and “always” should never be used in medicine since there are exceptions to every rule. For example, it is true that open wounds should be kept moist and not allowed to dry out. Most patients think incorrectly that a wound should be left to dry. They are partly correct. The only human tissue designed to be dry is the outer layer of the skin. Any healthy tissue is otherwise moist inside the body at all times. Desiccation or drying is fatal to human tissues. Too much moisture is bad also. Tissues become macerated. Some of the dressings we use address these problems. They work like the diapers advertised on TV. The innermost layer, up against to wound is a mesh. It allows the excess drainage from the wound to pass through. Excess fluid is absorbed into the fluffy outer gauze layers. The dressing against the wound is slightly moist but not soaking wet. Many commercial wound dressings work in this fashion.

One of our purposes in the wound clinic is to teach the patient good wound care and habits. They are told about wound prevention and when they should see a doctor. The doctors, nurses and staff all participate in this mission.

**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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