

VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery

Wounds - When they first happen

First Aid. I will divide this discussion into three parts. The first is what you should do, the second is what not to do and the third is why you should seek medical advice.

Let me begin by reviewing the initial treatment for an acid burn in the eye. Usually there is a label on the product and it will say something like wash with water for 15 minutes. The opposite of an acid is lye. The treatment is the same. One does not try to neutralize lye by putting acid on the eye or the wound. One of my professors once said that the solution to pollution is dilution. This holds true for most wound situations. First aid is to wash the wound with plain water or with mild soap and water. This will remove most of the debris and germs. The area should then be covered with a dry dressing. If there is bleeding then pressure should be applied to the wound and only the injured area. Do not use a circumferential dressing that acts as a tourniquet on simple wounds.

I tell people to use just tap water. It does not have to be sterile for a first aid situation. The soap should be mild, the same soap you normally wash your face with, nothing more. Germs get stuck on detergent particles and are carried off the wound by running water. The object is to try to remove the germs not to kill them. If the injury involves the use of a product or chemical then seek first aid instructions from the label.

Do Not Use peroxide, rubbing alcohol, Iodine or ointments as Polysporin or Neosporin. In my opinion these things can only make the wound worse. I cannot overemphasize that these things are bad in general and should not be used as first aid items. Ointments are particularly harmful for deep wounds. Patients come in with dirty wounds, contaminated with debris from the yard. If they put ointments in the wound we have trouble cleansing them. Ointments are grease based and water resistant. They impair our attempts to wash the wound clean.

We all used to heal fast and better then we do now. Do not overestimate the power of germs to make a big wound out of a small one. Blunt injuries could leave the skin intact but may result in extensive internal damage. Your well meaning friends cannot give you up to date medical advise. You need to seek medical attention. This is especially true for older people or those with health problems but is also true for children and for the middle aged. Nobody likes to go to the doctor but preventative medicine is doing whatever it takes to keep a small problem from becoming a big one. You are worth the extra effort.

**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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