First Aid Tips to Stop Bleeding

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Injuries and certain medical conditions can result in bleeding. This can trigger anxiety and fear, but bleeding has a healing purpose. Still, you need to understand how to treat common bleeding incidents such as cuts and bloody noses, as well as when to seek medical help.

Bleeding emergencies

Before you begin to treat an injury, you should identify its severity as best you can. There are some situations in which you shouldn't try to administer any kind of first aid at all. If you suspect that there's internal bleeding or if there's an embedded object surrounding the site of the injury, immediately call 911 or your local emergency services.

Also seek immediate medical care for a cut or wound if:

- it's jagged, deep, or a puncture wound
- it's on the face
- it's the result of an animal bite
- there's dirt that won't come out after washing
- the bleeding will not stop after 15 to 20 minutes of first aid

If a person is bleeding profusely, be on the lookout for symptoms of shock. Cold, clammy skin, a weakened pulse, and loss of consciousness can all indicate that a person is about to go into shock from blood loss, according to the Mayo Clinic. Even in cases of moderate blood loss, the bleeding person may feel lightheaded or nauseous.

If possible, have the injured person lie down on the floor while you wait

for medical care to arrive. If they are able, have them elevate their legs above their heart. This should help circulation to the vital organs while you wait for help. Hold continuous direct pressure on the wound until help arrives.

Cuts and wounds

When your skin is cut or scraped, you begin to bleed. This is because blood vessels in the area are damaged. Bleeding serves a useful purpose because it helps to clean out a wound. However, too much bleeding can cause your body to go into shock.

You can't always judge the seriousness of a cut or wound by the amount it bleeds. Some serious injuries bleed very little. On the other hand, cuts on the head, face, and mouth may bleed a lot because those areas contain a lot of blood vessels.

Abdominal and chest wounds can be quite serious because internal organs may be damaged, which can cause internal bleeding as well as shock. Abdominal and chest wounds are considered an emergency, and you should call for immediate medical help. This is especially important if there are symptoms of shock, which may include:

- dizziness
- weakness
- pale and clammy skin
- shortness of breath
- increased heart rate

A first aid kit that's properly stocked can make all the difference in stopping heavy bleeding. You should keep the following items around for situations where you may need to close a wound:

- sterilized medical gloves
- sterile gauze dressings
- small scissors
- medical grade tape

Saline wash can also be helpful to have on hand in order to clear out debris or dirt from a wound without touching it. An antiseptic spray, applied at the site of the cut, can help staunch blood flow and also reduce the risk of a cut becoming infected later on.

In the days following an injury, be on the lookout to ensure that a wound is healing correctly. If the initial scab covering the wound grows bigger or becomes surrounded by redness, there may be an infection. A cloudy fluid or pus draining from the wound is also a sign of possible infection. If the person develops a fever or begins to have pain again at the sign of the cut, seek medical attention immediately.

✓First aid do's

- Help the person to remain calm. If the cut is large or bleeding heavily, have them lie down. If the wound is on an arm or leg, raise the limb above the heart to slow bleeding.

- Remove obvious debris from the wound, such as sticks or grass.

- If the cut is small, wash it out with soap and water.

- After putting on clean latex gloves, apply firm pressure to the wound with a folded cloth or bandage for about 10 minutes. If blood soaks through, add another cloth or bandage and continue putting pressure on the cut for an additional 10 minutes.

- When bleeding has stopped, tape a clean bandage over the cut.

✗First aid don'ts

- Don't remove an object if it's embedded in the body.

- Don't attempt to clean a large wound.

- When first applying the bandage, don't remove it to look at the wound during this time. It may begin bleeding again.

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Minor injuries

Sometimes injuries that aren't traumatic or painful can bleed a great deal. Nicks from shaving, scrapes from falling off of a bike, and even pricking a finger with a sewing needle can result in excessive bleeding. For minor injuries such as these, you'll still want to stop the injury from bleeding. A sterilized bandage or Band-Aid, antiseptic spray, and a healing agent such as Neosporin can all be helpful in treating these injuries and preventing future infection.

Even with a minor cut, it's possible to have nicked an artery or blood vessel. If bleeding is still occurring after 20 minutes, medical attention is needed. Don't ignore a wound that won't stop bleeding just because it looks small or isn't painful.

Bloody nose

A bloody nose is common in both children and adults. Most nosebleeds are not serious, especially in children. Yet, adults can have nosebleeds related to high blood pressure or hardening of the arteries, and it may be more difficult to stop them.

Having tissues in your first aid kit, along with a topical nasal spray that is designed to go in the nasal passage (such as Sinex or Afrin), will help you

administer first aid for a nosebleed.

First aid for a nosebleed

- Have the person sit down and lean their head forward. This will reduce pressure in the nasal veins and slow the bleeding. It will also keep blood from flowing down into the stomach, which can cause nausea.

- If you'd like, use a nasal spray in the bleeding nostril while the person holds their head still. Have them push the bleeding nostril firmly against the septum (the dividing wall in the nose). If the person is unable to do this, put on latex gloves and hold the nose for them for five to 10 minutes.

- Once the nose stops bleeding, instruct the person not to blow their nose for several days. This could dislodge the clot and cause bleeding to begin again.

Seek professional help for a nosebleed if bleeding does not stop after about 20 minutes, or if the nosebleed is related to a fall or injury. The nose may have been broken during an injury. Recurring nosebleeds could be a symptom of something more serious, so tell a doctor if you're having regular nosebleeds.

Takeaway

Any situation that involves heavy bleeding can create fear and stress. Most people don't want to see their own blood, let alone someone else's! But staying calm and being prepared with a well-established first aid kit can make a difficult and painful experience a lot less traumatic. Remember that emergency help is only a phone call away, and take any incident of heavy bleeding seriously.

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How we reviewed this article:

ⓘ **SOURCES**   ↺ **HISTORY**

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