Punctures and Cuts Meeting Kit

Punctures and cuts are common on-the-job injuries. Punctures occur when objects such as splinters, nails, glass, and sharp tools such as scissors and knives pierce the skin and cause a small hole. Cuts occur when sharp objects, including knives, scissors, sharp metal edges, and glass slice through the skin superficially or into the deeper layers of fat, tendons, muscles, and even bone.

A PUNCTURE EXAMINED

A puncture wound is a deep wound that occurs due to something sharp and pointed, such as a nail. The opening on the skin is small, and the puncture wound may not bleed much. Puncture wounds can easily become infected. A doctor should always examine a deep puncture wound. Puncture wounds that occur due to a bite or stepping on a rusty piece of metal, such as a nail, need prompt medical attention.

A CUT EXAMINED

A cut is a break or opening in the skin. It is also called a laceration. A cut may be deep, smooth, or jagged. It may be near the surface of the skin, or deeper. A deep cut can affect tendons, muscles, ligaments, nerves, blood vessels, or bone.

FIRST AID FOR CUTS AND PUNCTURE WOUNDS

Cuts or puncture wounds that are minor may be treated at home. For more severe cuts or puncture wounds, immediate medical attention is necessary.

Cuts

First, stop any bleeding by covering the cut and applying gentle pressure. If the cut is bleeding heavily and you aren’t able to stop it, seek medical treatment immediately.

Next, clean the cut thoroughly with an alcohol wipe, antiseptic wash, or clean water. Dip a cotton swab into hydrogen peroxide and lightly roll it over the area of the cut to clean it. Use tweezers that have been cleaned with alcohol to remove debris on the surface of the cut. If you see debris embedded, don’t attempt to remove it.

Once the cut has been cleaned, apply an antibiotic cream to it. This can prevent infection and speed the healing process. Apply a bandage to the cut site. Change the bandage daily and whenever it becomes wet or dirty.

Treatment options for deep cuts include stitches, staples, or liquid stitches.

Puncture Wounds

First, attempt to stop the bleeding by covering the wound with a clean bandage and applying gentle pressure. If the wound is bleeding heavily and you cannot stop it, immediately seek emergency medical care.

Next, clean the area thoroughly using a small alcohol wipe. Don’t attempt to wash a puncture wound. If you notice debris embedded into the puncture wound, don’t try to remove it. Don’t probe the wound if you realize part of the object that caused the wound has broken off. Instead, seek emergency medical attention immediately.

Once the skin is clean, apply an over-the-counter antibiotic cream to prevent infection. Cover the puncture wound with a bandage. You should change the bandage daily or sooner if it becomes wet or dirty. Check for signs of infection, such as:

- redness
- drainage, such as pus, from the wound site
- swelling in the area

COMPLICATIONS OF CUTS AND PUNCTURE WOUNDS

- a wound infection
- a blood infection, or sepsis
- gangrene
- an amputation
- a loss of function in the area of the wound
- nerve damage
- organ damage

BEST SAFETY PRACTICES WHEN DEALING WITH PUNCTURES AND CUTS

Avoidance and Proper PPE: The best way to deal with cuts and punctures is to avoid getting them in the first place. Wear appropriate clothing on the job such as sturdy shoes or work boots, long sleeve shirts, and long pants. Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to your job tasks such as gloves, safety glasses, work boots, gauntlets, and chaps.

Safe Work Regime and Good Housekeeping: Follow safe work practices and know how to use your tools properly. Inspect, maintain, and replace your tools when necessary. Always use the correct tool for the job. Ensure that blades on cutting tools are sharpened; dull cutting surfaces can cause accidents. When working with sharp tools, always know where both of your hands are at all times. Practice good housekeeping with your sharp and cutting tools by sheathing and storing them properly. Place tools far back on workbenches and shelves, not against the edge where someone walking by might get stuck.

Broken Glass, Sharps and Syringes: If you have to pick up broken glass or metal shards, use a broom and a dustpan or pieces of cardboard. Never pick up broken glass with your bare hands. Dispose of sharp objects properly in rigid sided containers that will not get punctured and spill. Label these containers with the word “sharp” to warn coworkers of the hazard. Never reach into a garbage can with your hands or try to “tamp” it down with your hands or booted feet in case someone has improperly disposed of a sharp object or even a syringe. To properly dispose of syringes, pick

them up with tongs.

Workplace Cut/Puncture and First Aid: If you receive a puncture or cut on the job, notify your supervisor immediately. If you can, gently wash the area with soap and water. To stop bleeding, apply gentle pressure to the wound with clean gauze, cotton, or other absorbent material. When bleeding has stopped, apply an antibacterial ointment and a clean dressing to the wound. If you cannot stop the bleeding, if the wound is very large, or if you are impaled with an object, seek medical attention.

Tetanus Shot for Wounds: If your wound was caused by stepping on a nail or other sharp object in contact with the soil, you may be exposed to the bacteria that causes tetanus. Consider getting regular boosters for tetanus every five-to-ten years. If your wound was caused by a needlestick, seek medical testing and treatment due to a potential exposure to bloodborne pathogens. Consider a Hepatitis B vaccination if you are exposed to potential needlesticks.

FINAL WORD

Punctures and cuts are not the most flashy injuries, but are the most pervasive and require immediate care and treatment in all work sectors.