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Wound Care for Dogs and Cats

A wound is a mechanical injury to the body that may or may not cause a break in the skin. Wounds may be described many different ways. A *contusion* is a bruise which usually has no break in the skin. An *abrasion* is a superficial scrape or rubbing away of the outer layers of skin. An *incision* is a clean cut which is produced by a sharp object. A *laceration* is a wound with torn or jagged edges. A *puncture* is a penetrating wound of varying depths that tends to seal over quickly, and later form an abscess. Some open wounds require sutures to encourage healing, while others that are contaminated or small are better left open.

Drainage tubes (penrose drains) may be used to allow fluid or pus to escape from a deep or infected wound. Penrose drains are placed to protrude from the lowest or most pendulous portion of the wound to promote adequate drainage.

Home Care of the Wound

- Cleanse the wound gently with cotton balls or gauze sponges saturated with hydrogen peroxide or chlorhexidene solution followed by a clear warm water rinse 2-3 times daily. If a penrose drain is present, cleanse the skin on which the drainage accumulates. If a drainage tube has been placed to encourage adequate drainage of fluid from your pet's wound, your pet will need to be reexamined at our hospital in 3-5 days. If sutures have been placed to close your pet's wound, your pet will need to be reexamined at our hospital in 10-14 days, unless otherwise stated by your pet's attending veterinarian.
- If the wound is bandaged, the bandage will need to be changed at our hospital every _____ days. Keep the bandage dry and clean, and examine the skin around the bandage for redness or swelling 2-3 times daily.

Notify your veterinarian if:

- there is excessive bleeding or discharge from your pet's wound.
- your pet chews the sutures or opens the wound.
- swelling or redness occurs in the area of the wound.
- pain increases at the site of the wound.
- your pet's attitude or overall health worsens.