



BSA SAFETY MOMENT

WOUNDS—CUTS, ABRASIONS, AND PUNCTURES

SUMMARY

The most common injuries reported at BSA summer camps are cuts, abrasions, and punctures. Most are minor and require little more than basic first aid. However, some injuries can become more serious if not treated correctly. A few simple steps can take care of these annoying injuries and get you back to the action in a hurry and in good shape.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Cuts are by far the most common of these types of injuries and most often involve a woodworking tool—like a pocketknife—that is used as part of our program beginning in Cub Scouting.

Abrasions, such as scrapes and friction injuries, are also common. Falling and scraping a knee or hand while running or riding a bicycle are the most common causes.

Puncture wounds—those injuries where a sharp object pierces the skin and goes into the tissue—are slightly less common but do occur often at home, in the woods, or at camp. Stepping on a nail, getting a splinter, or being pierced by an awl during leathercraft are frequent occurrences.

First Aid

Minor wounds are treated the same and involve simple techniques taught in all levels of our program from Cub Scouting to Venturing.

1. Clean the wound: Simple soap and water work fine. In the case of a puncture, you should remove the item (splinter, thorn, nail, etc.).
2. Treat the wound: Typically a small amount of antibiotic ointment or cream will help speed healing and prevent infection. Be sure you don't use something that might cause an allergic reaction. Some skip this step altogether.
3. Cover the wound: A clean bandage is all that's needed for most of these types of injuries, but absorbent gauze and tape may be needed for larger abrasions. Replace a bandage that becomes wet, soiled, or bloody.

Note that more serious wounds should be handled a bit differently. Deep punctures, larger cuts, or any wound that looks infected (is red, oozes, or is hot) or won't stop bleeding may need to be evaluated by a medical provider. Puncture wounds may especially require attention as a tetanus booster may be needed. Wounds around eyes; punctures in the chest, neck, or abdomen; and any wound that won't stop bleeding may also need rapid medical attention. Animal or human bites will require medical attention, especially if the skin is broken. Please report to your council any incident that requires medical care beyond first aid.

RESOURCES

- *Boy Scout Handbook*, 13th ed., No. 34554
- *Fieldbook*, 5th ed., No. 34006
- *First Aid* merit badge pamphlet, No. 35897
- Incident Reporting: <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/incident-report/>