

# HEALERS' NOTES

## What are chronic wounds?

A chronic wound is a wound that fails to heal within one month. These wounds prevent the skin from performing its normal function of protecting against infection and holding nutrients within the body. Often these wounds are complicated by one or more chronic illnesses such as diabetes or atherosclerosis (poor blood flow). Such wounds can affect the whole person and lead to serious infections of bone and sometimes of the blood, resulting in costly treatment, amputation, loss of independence, reduced quality of life, and/or death.

### Common types of chronic wounds:

- Arterial ulcers occur when “plaque” builds up in the arteries reducing the amount of blood delivered to the body.
- Venous ulcers develop when blood pools in the lower leg veins, eventually leading to tissue breakdown. This pooling problem is usually a result of the veins’ inability to move blood back toward the heart
- Pressure (decubitus) ulcers, or bed sores, are injuries to the skin and underlying tissue usually caused by unrelieved pressure.

### The Wound Healing Center is a resource for the care and maintenance of wounds and feet.

The doctors and nurses who work at the center will figure out why wounds aren’t healing and help patients learn to take care of themselves.

*Physicians* establish plans of care to improve each patient’s chances of healing. This plan of care may include special testing for blood flow problems and infection, among other things. The plan of care may also include special medications and wound dressings.

*Nurses* teach about the tests, medications, and wound dressings. They’ll also explain how to care for wounds, stop wounds from coming back, and outline steps to improve overall health since healthier people heal faster.

The *people with wounds* are also involved in developing their plans of care so that it meets their needs and can be followed.



Wooster Community Hospital  
Hyperbaric Medicine and  
Wound Healing Center  
1761 Beall Avenue • Wooster, OH  
Phone: 330-263-8750 • Fax: 330-263-8752  
[www.woosterhospital.org](http://www.woosterhospital.org)

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## What can you do?

- *Keep the outside of your dressing clean and dry.* If it becomes soiled or wet, change it as soon as you can.
- *Bathe daily with soap and water.* Change your dressing after you bathe.
- *Eat a well-balanced diet.* Follow special dietary or fluid restrictions that your doctor has discussed.
- *Examine your wound carefully each time you remove your dressing.*

### Caring for your skin

- **Wash** with mild soap and warm water.
- **Apply** moisturizers to prevent dryness.
- **Use** an electric razor to shave legs.
- **Do not put** anything in an open wound that is not prescribed by your doctor or about which you have not talked to your doctor or nurse.

## What will happen during the wound evaluation?

- Your feet will be tested to see how much feeling you have and if your blood flow is healthy.
- Your wound will be examined and measured.
- You will be given information about how to care for your wound.
- Your findings will be discussed with your doctor so that he/she can decide how to proceed with your care.

## What about follow up visits?

If you continue to come to the Wound Healing Center, we will re-examine your wound to see what progress has been made. We'll review your test results and remove any dead tissue. We'll also answer any questions you have about how to care for your wound or what's going to happen next.

## Call your physician if you notice:

- Increased pain at the wound site.
- Redness or swelling around or spreading away from the wound.
- Foul odor coming from the wound.
- Any change in color or amount of drainage from the wound.
- Fever or chills; nausea or vomiting.



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