EMERGENCY WOUND CARE

The risk for injury during and after a hurricane and other natural disasters is high. Prompt first aid can help heal small wounds and prevent infection. Tetanus (*http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/vis-td.pdf*) is a potential health threat for persons who have open wounds.

Seek medical attention as soon as possible if:

- There is a foreign object embedded in the wound;
- The wound is at special risk of infection (such as a dog bite or a puncture by a dirty object);
- An old wound shows signs of becoming infected (increased pain and soreness, swelling, redness, draining, or you develop a fever).

How to Care for Minor Wounds

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water if possible.
- Avoid touching the wound with your fingers while treating it (if possible, use disposable, latex gloves).
- Remove obstructive jewelry and clothing from the injured body part.
- Apply direct pressure to any bleeding wound to control bleeding.
- Clean the wound after bleeding has stopped.
  - Examine wounds for dirt and foreign objects.
  - Gently flood the wound with bottled water or clean running water (if available, saline solution is preferred).
  - Gently clean around the wound with soap and clean water.
  - Pat dry and apply an adhesive bandage or dry clean cloth.
- Leave unclean wounds, bites, and punctures open. Wounds that are not cleaned correctly can trap bacteria and result in infection.
- Provide pain relievers when possible.

Other Considerations

- Expect a variety of infection types from wounds exposed to standing water, sea life, and ocean water.
- Wounds in contact with soil and sand can become infected.
- Puncture wounds can carry bits of clothing and dirt into wounds and result in infection.
- Crush injuries are more likely to become infected than wounds from cuts.
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If you have wounds, you should be evaluated for a tetanus immunization. If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, have a health care professional determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary based on individual records.

For additional information on disaster planning and recovery, go to the Arkansas Department of Health website at ***www.healthy.arkansas.gov*** or call toll-free at ***1-800-462-0599*** or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at ***http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/workers.aspdc.gov/disasters***

Arkansas Department of Health
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