



Wound Healing Foundation COVID-19 Pandemic Wound Patient Tips on March 21, 2020

Wound assessment and wound care is essential to prevent hospitalization during COVID-19 pandemic

Wound patients and their caregivers need to know that chronic wound patients are considered to be in a high-risk category for mortality from COVID-19 (**CO**rona **V**irus **I**nfectious **D**isease). Chronic wound patients often present with other conditions such as older age, diabetes, high blood pressure, lung disease, heart disease, bad venous return and being overweight, any of which increases the likelihood of dying from COVID-19.

Many wound clinics have reduced hours or closed wound clinics which could prevent wound patients from seeing your wound care provider. **If you have an appointment and you have COVID-19 symptoms, do not go to the clinic.** Contact your wound care provider to make alternate arrangements. Many wound care providers are changing how they talk to and see their wound patients in order to monitor the wound while helping wound patients avoid accidentally being exposed to COVID-19 by others. Chronic wound care patients and their care givers play an important part by providing their wound care provider key information about their wound and overall health.

Here are some suggested tips to help wound care patients and their care givers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Good Hygiene

- Washing your hands with soap and water for 20-60 seconds (singing the ABCs is about 25 seconds; the Happy Birthday song is about 10 seconds). Make sure to get in between the fingers and under fingernails where germs and dirt like to hide, but also the back of your hands and your wrists. Hand washing is important to staying healthy and should be done often. This [Centers for Disease Control](#) video and [American Society for Microbiology and American Cleaning Institute](#) paper can help you wash better.
- If you cannot wash your hands with soap, then use an antimicrobial cleanser or hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol alcohol. Make sure you use enough and rub your hands like you are washing until your hands are dry.
- Use antimicrobial wipes or other cleaning products to get rid of germs on surfaces, especially things that are touched a lot such as doorknobs, computer keyboard, TV remotes, steering wheel, etc. Read the label of the cleaning product to know how long the cleanser should stay in place so you kill all the germs. Drying or removing the product too quickly will not allow the cleaning product to be effective.
- If you must go out, make sure to keep 6 feet or more space from others you do not live with. We strongly suggest you wear a regular mask, especially if you have a cough, cold or prone to

sneezing when you go out. You can minimize spreading germs to others by covering your mouth and nose. It is everyone's responsibility to minimize spreading germs.

- Take advantage of free delivery or curbside services where offered. Many communities also offer a special day and time to shop for people who are considered a COVID-19 high-risk population like yourself.

Good Health

- Drink water to help stay hydrated.
- Eat a healthy diet. Good nutrition will give your body the nutrients it needs to stay healthy and help heal your wound.
- Exercise as your health care provider and your condition allows. Moving around helps your blood move to where it is needed.
- Get some fresh air while making sure to maintain distance from others who do not live with you.
- Get enough sleep at night. Good sleeping habits help your immune system stay healthy.
- Depression can slow wound healing, so mention this to your health care provider if you are feeling anxious, lonely, depressed, or isolated.

Good Wound Hygiene and Prevention

- Follow your wound care provider's instructions for keeping the wound clean. Make sure the dressing changes are being done as often as your providers have instructed you. The provider may switch your current wound dressing to something different to help with fewer office visits.
- If you have edema, make sure you follow your wound care provider's instructions to control the edema.
- If your wound is in an area that receives a lot of pressure, make sure you follow your wound care provider's instructions for pressure relief (*i.e.* turning often, using orthodontics, etc).
- Your healthcare provider will probably teach you more specific wound care routines to help keep your wound healing.

Good Communication

- Good communication is even more important now than before as appointments will be limited. Your wound care provider may start using telephone calls, text, e-mail even more. Many providers are using telemedicine/telehealth virtual visits so they can see you and your wound. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Medicare is covering telehealth visits under the 1135 waiver. Make your cost concerns known.
- Think about what communication options, including photos and videos, you have access to right now so if the wound clinic staff asks, you know. Also let the staff know if you have someone at home who can help you with your wound.
- Your wound care provider may ask you to provide photos of your wound. Make sure the photo shows the wound clearly. The staff may provide you with little sticker rulers to help them see the size of the wound.
- When contacting or speaking with the wound care provider, tell them if the wound patient has changes in any symptoms including blood sugar readings or fever, chills, increased or new pain.

- When speaking with the wound care provider, they may ask a lot of questions. Your answers will help them better serve you, so answer them honestly and with as much description as possible. Think about using these four senses of sight, color, smell, and touch to describe the wound. Here are some **examples**:
 - **Sight**- *E.g.* There is undermining or tunneling on the side closest to the ankle. The wound looks smaller and drier. There is more drainage. The scab looks leathery.
 - **Color**- *E.g.* The wound is bright red. The drainage has a blue-green color. The skin around the wound is pink.
 - **Smell**- *E.g.* The wound smells different than before. The drainage has a fruity smell.
 - **Touch**- *E.g.* The wound is painful. The skin around the wound is hard.
- Don't ignore your wound! Know when to contact your wound care provider. If you do not know, ask!
- Consider joining the Wound Healing Foundation's [free support forum](#) on Inspire. This moderated forum enables you to chat with other wound patient's and care givers across the world. You are not alone.

Many of the tips we provided are common but can improve your likelihood of staying healthy during the pandemic. The Wound Healing Foundation is confident that with the challenges facing us during the COVID-19 pandemic, new solutions and treatments for wound care patients will be discovered and developed.

The Wound Healing Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit whose mission is to improve the quality of life for wound healing patients and their families through support of awareness, research and education.