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SECTION B

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Chronic Wounds Need Special Care

Chronic wounds need special care

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For most of us, a cut or scrape is no big deal. Given time and some basic care like cleansing and dressings, the wound will heal itself.

At least five million chronic wounds are treated in the United States each year. Chronic wounds either take longer to heal than normal, don't heal completely or recur frequently. People with diabetes or vascular problems are more prone to developing these non-healing wounds.

A number of factors play a role in creating chronic wounds. Poor nutrition, medications, or diseases such as diabetes or vascular problems may be contributing factors for the development of chronic wounds. Additionally, people who are confined to a bed or use a wheelchair for long periods of time may develop pressure sores that can become chronic wounds.

Because of the number of contributing factors affecting chronic wounds, specialized care is needed to treat the problem. Treatment may include removing dead tissue on, or in the wound

(debridement), keeping a dressing on the wound that treats the bacteria that may cause infection. In some cases, negative pressure devices and/or skin and skin substitutes may be used to promote new, healthy skin cells.

North Shore Medical Center's coordinated inpatient and outpatient wound healing programs use a team approach that includes health care specialists from a number of areas including podiatry, vascular, surgery, endovascular, physical therapy, occupational therapy and dietary under the director of our full time wound care Please turn to WOUNDS 18B



DR. MALCOLM GOLDSMITH

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director. The patient and the family are part of the team as they learn to care for the wound between visits. Patient education on wound prevention is part of the services offered.

PREVENTION IS KEY

In the case of wound care, prevention is the best medicine. People with diabetes and vascular problems need to take precautions to prevent wounds from occurring, especially on their feet.

Here are some tips on good foot care:

- Wash feet daily with mild soap and lukewarm water. Dry carefully and dust feet

with talcum powder to wick away moisture.

- Inspect feet and toes daily to check for cuts, bruises, sores or other changes.
- Lose weight. Diabetes plus excess weight increases your risk of complications.
- Wear thick, soft socks.

Avoid mended socks or those with seams that can rub and cause blisters.

- Stop smoking. Tobacco contributes to circulatory

problems.

- Cut toenails straight across, file (only) at the corners.
- Exercise to improve your circulation.
- Be properly measured and fitted every time you buy new shoes. New shoes should fit

properly when you buy them.

- Don't go barefoot, even in your own home.

- Don't wear high heels, sandals or shoes with pointy toes.

Pressure ulcers (also called bed sores) may occur less often by ensuring that the skin is kept clean and moisturized. The patient's position in bed or on a chair should be changed frequently, and caregivers should be careful to lift rather than slide the patient. Special mattresses or supports may be used to help prevent pressure ulcers from forming.

If you would like to learn more about wound care services, please call our wound healing center at 305-694-3409.