Your Wound Care Journey:
A Passport to Success
Welcome to ProMedica Wound Care. You are here because you have an open sore that has not healed. It can be a long journey to heal a wound, and we will travel that road together.

This is a guide about how to take care of your wound. The guide will:

- Explain wound healing
- Teach you ways to help with healing your wound
- Keep track of your progress

This guide is your Passport to Success. Just as you would carry an actual passport on a long trip, you must take it this Passport with you to every Wound Care appointment. The doctor or nurse will add notes each time and may take a photo of your wound to measure progress on your journey.

It’s up to you

At ProMedica Wound Care, we will examine your wound at every visit and provide whatever medical care is needed that day. The number one goal of your wound care treatment is to heal the wound. We will teach you about cleaning the wound, how to change dressings and how your life style can affect your healing process. The rest is up to you. You are the most important member of the care team. We will help in whatever way we can. But you must be committed to completing the healing journey.

Here are some of your responsibilities:

- Take an active role in your care
- Learn how to take care of your wound
- Know what signs to report
- Follow your prescribed diet
- Take your medications as ordered
- Ask questions if you do not understand the treatment plan or the instructions

You may think of questions at home that you want to ask the doctor or nurse. Please write them down in the “Notes” section at the end of this passport. Or call one of the ProMedica Wound Care locations listed inside the front cover of this booklet.

What is a wound?

A wound is an opening in your skin. It may be a cut or another injury somewhere on your body.

It’s important to know what caused the wound, because your help is needed in taking care of the reason that caused the wound.
Types of wounds
There are four general types of wounds (nurse will check all that apply to you):

☐ Pressure ulcer   ☐ Vascular ulcer
☐ Surgical wound   ☐ Diabetic ulcer

Pressure ulcers
A pressure sore, also called a bedsore or a decubitus ulcer, may range in severity from a minor skin reddening to a deep wound that exposes muscle and bone. Pressure sores occur when there is constant pressure to a part of your body. The pressure does not let oxygen feed the area and causes cells to die.

Certain areas of your body are more likely to develop pressure ulcers. The areas are called pressure points.

Here are some common pressure points:

- Buttocks
- Hip bones
- Heels
- Elbows
- Shoulder blades
- Ankles

You are more likely to get a pressure ulcer if you:

- Use a wheelchair or stay in bed for a long time.
- Are an older adult.
- Cannot move certain parts of your body without help.
- Have a disease that affects blood flow, including diabetes or vascular disease.
- Have a condition that affects your mental status.
- Have fragile skin.
- Have urinary or bowel incontinence.
- Have poor nutrition.

You can lower your risk for pressure ulcers by following the guidelines in this book and by following the instructions you receive from the Wound Care doctors and nurses.

Surgical wounds
Sometimes after surgery, the doctor will leave a wound open to heal slowly from the inside out. Other types of surgical wounds include:

- Pin sites
- Devices implanted under the skin
- Central venous line sites
- Wounds with drains
- Sutured or stapled incision sites

When a surgical wound does not heal within an expected period of time, your doctor may recommend special wound care.

Vascular ulcers
Vascular ulcers are wounds caused by poor circulation. They most often occur in the legs or feet. They can be classified as either venous (related to veins) or arterial (related to arteries). Venous ulcers occur because blood does not travel back up your leg properly. You may see swelling, color changes and weeping.
Arterial ulcers occur when blood does not circulate all the way down to your toes. You may have pain when you walk, at rest or at night.

The goal of treating vascular ulcers is the same as any other kind of wound: to promote healing and prevent complications.

**Diabetic ulcers**

People with diabetes are more likely to get sores on their feet for several reasons. They may have poor circulation or they may have nerve damage, called neuropathy. With neuropathy, you have trouble feeling pain or irritation in your feet, so you don’t know when something is causing skin damage.

When a person has diabetes, a rise in blood sugar may be the first sign that a wound is starting to develop.

**The healing process**

In a healthy, active person, skin healing begins almost immediately after a cut or injury. Blood starts to clot and chemical reactions stimulate the skin cells to grow.

When a person has diabetes, poor nutrition, is older or is unable to move well, healing a wound, ulcer or sore is a process that takes time and needs lots of care. Your body’s cells need food, fluids, oxygen and rest.

To help heal the wound, it’s important to know what caused it and remove the cause. For example, if your wound was caused by pressure, you will need to remove the source of pressure from that area. Several factors affect how fast your wound heals, including the size of the wound, how deep it is, what caused it, the care it receives, and your general health.

Other factors are:

- Age
- Infection
- Pressure
- Circulation
- Medications
- Nutrition
- Activity

Whether your wound is deep or shallow, your body needs good nutrition for healing to take place. Please remember to eat the proper foods, drink fluids, and be patient.

**Taking care of your wound**

ProMedica Wound Care recommends some basic steps in caring for your wound. It is important to follow the instructions your doctor or nurse gives you.

Since you will care for your wound every day, you will need room for supplies and equipment. Keep everything needed for wound care in one place so you can gather the items easily.

Please be aware of what you are doing that can cause or spread infection. For example, if you sneeze or answer the phone after you have washed your hands, you must wash your hands again.

In the Wound Care clinic, you will receive detailed instructions about wound care at home, including how to do each step and what kind of dressing to use. In general, here is the daily routine:

- Wash your hands
- Gather your supplies
- Remove the old dressing
- Wash the wound
- Examine the wound
- Dress the wound
Signs of infection
Infection is the enemy of wound healing. It can spread to the area around the wound, to the bone, or through your whole body. If you notice any signs of infection, please call your nurse or doctor immediately.

Here are signs of wound infection:
- Thick green or yellow drainage
- Foul odor
- Redness or warmth around the wound
- Tenderness around the wound
- Swelling
- Wound not healing even when you do everything right

Infection may spread to the rest of your body.

Here are signs of widespread infection:
- Fever or chills
- Weakness
- Confusion or trouble concentrating
- Rapid heart rate

Infection control in the home
Washing your hands is the most important step in avoiding infection!

Here are common times to wash your hands:
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before preparing food
- After using the toilet, changing a diaper or cleaning up after someone who has gone to the bathroom.
- Handling soiled linens
- Handling garbage
- Handling animals or their waste
- Coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose

Your nurse will teach you the proper way to wash your hands and other ways to prevent infection.

Nutrition
For wounds to heal, your body needs good nutrition. You must eat a balanced diet and drink fluids. Your body needs more protein during the healing process, and you must take vitamins.

Eating a well-balanced diet that is high in protein, vitamins and minerals is very important to maintain healthy skin and grow new tissue. If for some reason, you cannot eat a normal diet, please be sure to tell your wound care team about it. Your nurse will discuss more details about your diet.

Protein is important because it is the building block for new cells and wound repair. Common sources of protein include:
- Meat, fish, eggs, cooked dried beans, peas and soy products, such as tofu
- Milk, cheese, yogurt, pudding, ice cream
- Peanut butter, peanuts, nuts and seeds
- Cereal and grain foods

Medications
The doctor may order certain medications to help your wound heal better. Here are common medications used in wound healing:
- Diuretics (water pills) to decrease swelling
- Antibiotics to fight infection
- Aspirin to reduce inflammation
- Analgesics (pain medicine) to treat pain

It is important to let the Wound Care doctor know about other medicines you may be taking. Some medicines may actually delay wound healing.

- Handling soiled linens
- Handling garbage
- Handling animals or their waste
- Coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose

Your nurse will teach you the proper way to wash your hands and other ways to prevent infection.
Glossary of terms

**Artery:**
A network of tubes, called vessels, that carries fresh blood away from the heart. This blood carries oxygen and nutrients to the tissues and skin.

**Cleansing/irrigation:**
Rinsing the wound by pouring a solution (usually normal saline) over the wound. Cleansing removes dead cells and other matter from the wound. Note: your nurse will tell you which cleansing solution to use.

**Compression bandages:**
Bandages that reduce swelling in your legs. Compression bandages help keep blood and other body fluids from leaking into the skin.

**Debridement:**
Removing unhealthy or dead tissue from the wound. The doctor or nurse will debride your wound with surgical tools, ointments or special dressings.

**Drainage:**
Fluid made by the wound. Normal fluid is clear pink or clear yellow. If the fluid becomes thick green or yellow or smells bad, tell your doctor or nurse immediately.

**Edema:**
Swelling in your legs, usually caused by poor circulation in your veins. Edema is a common condition and must be controlled when treating wounds. If you have edema, you will be instructed to keep your legs elevated. You may also need to wear compression stockings or wraps.

**Incontinence:**
Not able to control urine or stool. Incontinence can make wounds worse and cause infection. Careful cleaning is very important.

**Infection:**
An increase of bacteria in the wound that slows healing and can cause other problems.

**Moisture barrier:**
A thick paste that protects skin from the chemicals in urine and stool. It usually contains zinc oxide.

**Moisturizer:**
Creams or lotions that contain oils to make the skin soft.

**Neuropathy:**
A type of nerve damage that causes loss of feeling in an area, especially the feet and toes.

**Offloading:**
Taking pressure and weight off the area of the wound. Too much pressure on the wound can slow healing and break down new tissue. Your nurse will tell you how to offload and protect the wound.

**Pressure ulcer:**
A sore caused by constant pressure on the skin from sitting or lying on a hard surface for too long.

**Vein:**
A network of tubes, called vessels, that carries used blood from the tissues and skin back to the heart.

**Wound:**
An injury to living tissue in which the skin is broken. A wound may be caused by an outside action, such as a gunshot, fall, or surgical procedure. Or, a wound may be caused an infection or another ailment, such as diabetes or poor circulation.
Notes and questions to ask the doctor

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ProMedica Wound Care Locations

ProMedica Toledo Hospital / Central Region
Main Office
3110 W. Central Avenue, Suite A
Toledo, OH 43606
419-473-6633

ProMedica Bay Park Hospital
2751 Bay Park Dr., Suite 100
Oregon, OH 43616
419-473-6633

ProMedica Bixby Hospital
818 Riverside Avenue
Adrian, MI 49221
517-265-0900

ProMedica Defiance Regional Hospital
Medical Office Building
1250 Ralston Ave., Suite 106
Defiance, OH 43512
419-783-6931

ProMedica St. Luke's Hospital
Diabetes Care Center and Wound Healing Institute
5871 Monclova Road
Maumee, OH 43537
419-897-8376