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# Discharge Instructions for a Gunshot Wound

It will take some time for your gunshot wound to heal. The length of time depends on your health and how serious the wound is. The bullet may have broken a bone in your body or caused a lot of damage to muscles, organs, or nerves. The bullet may also have been left in your body because getting it out would have caused you more harm. Follow these instructions and any others your healthcare provider gives you to help you recover at home.

## Wound care

Once you are at home, caring for your wound is vital. Always follow your healthcare provider's instructions. Proper wound care may involve the following:

- Make sure the wound stays clean and dry. Wash it daily with soap and water.
- Raise the part of your body where the wound is, if directed.
- Don't soak the wound, unless your healthcare provider says it's OK to do so.

Also watch for signs of infection, such as:

- Redness or swelling around the wound
- A lot of blood or pus coming from the wound
- Foul odor
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your provider

## Medicine

Your healthcare provider may give you medicine to ease pain or to prevent an infection. Take these medicines as directed. If you have any serious side effects, talk with your healthcare provider right away. If no pain medicines were prescribed, you may use over-the-counter pain medicine, unless your provider tells you not to. Talk with your provider before using these medicines if you have chronic liver or kidney disease. Also talk with your provider if you have had a stomach ulcer or gastrointestinal (GI) bleeding.

## Follow-up care

Your healthcare provider may need to check on the wound from time to time to make sure it is healing normally. You may also need more surgeries, depending on the extent of your injuries. See your healthcare provider as directed.

It's normal to feel some stress and anxiety after a traumatic event like a gunshot wound. Tell your healthcare provider if you are feeling anxious, angry, or depressed or having trouble sleeping or focusing. A mental health expert can help.

## Call 911

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Call 911 if any of these occur:

- Wound continues to bleed even after putting direct pressure on it
- For chest, back, or abdomen wounds:
  - Shortness of breath
  - Painful breathing
  - Back or abdomen pain that gets worse
  - Weakness
  - Dizziness or fainting

## **When to call your healthcare provider**

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Redness, swelling, or fluid leaking from your wound that gets worse
- Pain that gets worse
- Symptoms that don't get better, or get worse
- New symptoms