

Packing a Wound at Home

When you pack a wound, you're removing the old bandage and packing, and replacing it with fresh packing.

If you have a deep wound, your doctor may teach you how to pack it at home.

Your doctor can tell you how often to repack the wound and what supplies to use.

If you can't reach the wound, you may need someone else to help you pack it.

Here's how it's done.

First, wipe clean the area where you'll be working.

Then wash your hands with soap and water.

Place a clean bowl on a clean towel, without touching the inside of the bowl.

Then lay out the rest of your supplies: gauze or other packing material, medical gloves, wetting solution, tape, dressing, and cotton swabs.

Put your packing material in the bowl.

If the material comes in a strip, cut some of it off and put it in the bowl.

Your doctor will tell you how much to use.

Pour the solution into the bowl--enough to cover your packing material.

Cut off a few strips of tape and have them ready.

Remove the old dressing and packing material, put them in a plastic trash bag, and wash your hands again with soap and water.

Now, put on disposable medical gloves.

Gently squeeze the new packing material until it's just a little wet.

Using your fingers or a cotton swab, gently fill the wound with the material.

Pack the whole wound until the material is snug but not too tight.

After the wound is packed, take a new, clean dressing from the package, and tape it down over the wound.

Throw the gloves away--in the trash bag with the old packing material-- and wash your hands one more time.

You may have a little pain or bleeding from the wound, which is normal.

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It should feel better over time.

As your wound heals, watch for any problems.

Call your doctor or get medical care right away if you have symptoms of a new infection or one that's getting worse, such as increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness; red streaks leading from the area or red streaks that get worse; pus draining from the area or more pus than the bandage can absorb; or a fever.

Also call your doctor if you have a lot of bleeding, or if your wound is changing color or has a worse odor.

You might feel a little uncomfortable packing your wound at first.

But once you've done it, and you know it's helping your wound heal, you'll probably start to feel more comfortable.

And it'll get easier over time.