

If a wound lingers for more than 30 days, it's not just a wound. It's a symptom.



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For most of us, a cut or wound is a temporary annoyance that heals over time. But for some people – particularly those with circulatory problems that are a result of diabetes or advanced age – wounds can become a cause for major concern. If left untreated, they can lead to serious medical problems.

Any patient with a chronic wound that does not heal in 30 days should see a wound specialist. It is likely an indication of a significant underlying problem, such as uncontrolled diabetes or poor circulation caused by another medical condition.

In advanced cases of diabetes, circulation to the extremities – usually the legs, feet and toes – tends to decrease. If these areas are injured or if pressure sores develop, poor blood circulation prevents healing. Sores that don't heal can become infected, and potentially even gangrenous. And, because gangrene can spread throughout the body, in extreme cases, amputation may be necessary. Advanced age is another leading cause of circulatory problems that can inhibit proper healing.

Advancements in wound care can promote healing. At the Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center at Maimonides Medical Center, we take a multidisciplinary approach using the most advanced wound care services to address the needs of patients with chronic, non-healing wounds of the extremities. Our team of physicians and nurses begins by evaluating every patient from head to toe and then devises a treatment plan based on the type of wound and its severity. We are proud to have a very low amputation rate, which means that we are usually successful in preventing wounds from becoming life-threatening.

For less severe wounds, treatment may include the use of conventional or advanced wound dressings to keep wounds sterile and facilitate healing. Foot wounds may require special protective footwear to allow proper healing. Antibiotic therapy or topical drugs with factors that promote skin growth may be prescribed. Synthetic skin grafts are also effective in certain cases.

Some non-healing wounds are particularly dangerous and may require more serious intervention. In these cases, vascular surgery is sometimes performed to restore circulation. Hyperbaric oxygen (HBO) therapy is also an effective treatment and often used to accelerate the healing of wounds that result from diabetes. A patient is placed in a special pressurized chamber under increased atmospheric pressure for approximately 90 minutes and breathes pure oxygen, which promotes healing.

Of course, the best option is to prevent these wounds from developing in the first place. With that goal in mind, we offer education and prevention services that encourage patients at risk to pay attention to the minor cuts and scrapes that can become more serious wounds. In addition, we provide nutritional counseling so that patients with diabetes follow diets that promote healing and properly manage their condition.

Don't ignore wounds that aren't healing properly. Make an appointment to see your primary care doctor, and ask if you should be seen by a wound care specialist. For more information about the Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center at Maimonides, please call (718) 283-8590.



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