

HOW TO STITCH A GAPING WOUND

You will need 3 clean, dry hand towels or other cloths, clean water, tweezers, small pliers, scissors, a high-proof liquor (preferably vodka or gin), diphenhydramine (a liquid antihistamine), a sewing needle, unused fishing line or dental floss, and tissues.

1 Stop the bleeding.

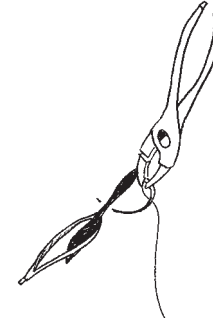
Hold one of the hand towels over the wound for 15 minutes, using firm pressure. Do not use a tourniquet because you will cut off the blood supply and may force an amputation. Raise the affected limb above the level of the heart to slow bleeding. Do not attempt to stitch the wound until bleeding is under control.

2 Clean the wound.

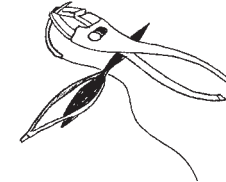
Soak the injured body part in warm water. Gently scrub the wound, taking care not to dislodge any obvious blood clots. Irrigate by running cool water over the wound for 5 minutes.

3 Inspect the wound carefully for foreign material.

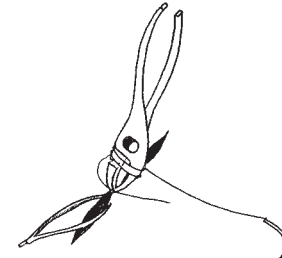
Use tweezers to remove any foreign objects, then irrigate again. (Remember the phrase: "The solution to pollution is dilution.")



Grip the needle with the pliers so that the needle's point curves upward.



Enter the skin $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the wound's edge. Pull the needle through the skin using the pliers.



Wrap two loops of thread from the "needle" side of the thread around the nose of your pliers. Grab the 2-inch tail of the thread with your pliers and gently pull it through the looped thread to create the knot.

4 Sterilize your equipment.

Wash the needle, tweezers, pliers, and scissors in hot, soapy water. Rinse once with warm water, then again with alcohol. Lay the tools to dry on one of the towels.

5 Wash your hands.

Lather for at least 5 minutes.

6 Prepare the victim.

Instruct the victim to lie down on a table or the floor, preferably on his back. Do not allow the victim to sit or stand. Rinse the wound again with warm water and pat it dry. Splash lightly with alcohol and wait 3 minutes. Pour several capfuls of the diphenhydramine directly into the wound to provide some anesthesia.

7 Prepare a clean work space.

Cut a hole in the center of the third towel. Place this “smock” over the wound, making sure the complete wound is visible through the hole.

8 Prepare the needle and thread.

Using the pliers, bend the needle into a “C” shape. Measure out ten times the length of the wound in fishing line or dental floss. Cut. Run the “thread” through the eye of the needle so the needle rests one-quarter of the way down the thread. Rewash your hands.

9 Make the first stitch.

You should “throw” the first stitch at the midpoint of the wound. First, grip the needle with the pliers, clamping over the needle’s hole. Next, hold the pliers so that the needle’s point curves upward. Turn your wrist and aim the point directly down at the skin. Use your other hand to hold up the wound edge with the tweezers. Finally, enter the skin $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the wound’s edge, come through the wound, enter the other side of the wound’s edge, and come out $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the other edge of the wound.

10 Knot each stitch.

Pull the needle through the skin using the pliers, then pull the thread with your hand until 2 inches are left on the side where the needle entered the skin. Loosely wrap two loops of thread from the “needle side” of the thread around the nose of your pliers. Grab the 2-inch tail with your pliers, then apply gentle upward pressure to bring both edges of the wound together. Pull your pliers back through the looped floss to create the knot, pulling gently in opposite directions so the knot lies flat on the skin.

11 Lock the knot.

Quickly arc your pliers-hand toward the needle side of the thread and pull both ends of the thread down onto the skin. Doing so “locks” the knot and moves the knot onto the skin rather than over the wound.

12 Secure the knot.

Repeat the looping and knotting five times, alternating the direction of the looping; this will avoid “granny” knots that will not hold. If you notice that your hands are alternating back and forth in a rhythmic pattern as you tie each knot, you are tying correctly. Double-check that the knot is pulled to the side so that it lays over the skin, not on the wound itself.

13 Cut the thread.

Cut both ends of thread. Leave a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch tail of thread so the stitching can be removed later.

14 Continue stitching.

Choose the midpoint between the first stitch and one end of the wound and repeat steps 10 through 14. Continue to bisect the wound between stitches, throwing additional stitches and tying knots until the wound is closed.

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