




Skin Tears 101

By Misty Powell



Being a family caregiver is certainly not a glamorous job. Anyone who has ever dealt with skin tears knows how hard it is to change the bandage when the wound is stuck to it. The best thing you can do in that situation is to run the whole bandage under water until it loosens from the wound. But to avoid that, here's an ouchless/stickless way to apply the bandages for ease at change time. Try to keep these items on hand because you never know when emergencies will arise. Use the items in the order given below. The costs quoted are for chain drugstore store brands:

- ✓ **Sterile saline wound wash** - It does not burn or sting and removes dirt painlessly & effectively from wounded area. If need be, gently guide the skin back into position with a cotton swab. \$8.99 (7.1 fl oz).
- ✓ **Absorbent sterile gauze pads** - Used to dry the areas. Throw away when done. Rayon-Poly Blend. 10 or 25/box. Sizes: (3"x3") & (4"x4") \$2.99 to \$6.99.
- ✓ **Non-stick dressings** - These will not stick to wounds. Keep the largest size on hand because you can always cut them down to size. Cut one pad into fourths. Apply Polysporin® ointment in a thin layer just enough to "wet" the skin. Apply the ointment in the direction you want the skin to lay. Use separate little pads for each application site then throw them away. Once ointment is applied, place a new non-stick dressing (cut to fit if necessary) over wound. 10/box. Sizes: (1 ½" x 2"), (2" x 3"), (4" x 3") \$1.99 to \$4.99.
- ✓ **Polysporin® Ointment** - The doctor specifically said this rather than Neosporin® and emphasized this should be a thin layer and not "globbed on". I used the chain drugstore version of this called "Poly Bacitracin" and it worked awesomely. I found the wounds healed in record time. Store brand costs ½ oz or 1 oz. \$5.49 or \$7.59.
- ✓ **Rolled gauze** - Stretches and conforms to hard-to-bandage areas and helps to hold the non-stick dressings in place. Wrap appropriately. Widths: 2", 3", 4".

\$2.99 to \$4.49.

✓ **Elastic Stretch Net** - Tubular dressing holder helps the rolled gauze hold the non-stick dressings in place firmly and comfortably. I found this at one chain drugstore and not another so you may need to shop around. 5 yards. Small size for hands, wrists & elbows. Large size for knees and ankles. \$4.99 to \$5.99

This article appeared in our July 2010 newsletter.