

Changing a Dry Gauze Dressing

1. Always know how often a person's doctor recommends you change their dressing. Your home health nurse will also advise you on how often to change the dressing.
2. A gauze dressing is usually changed each day (or more often) if it becomes saturated with drainage.
3. If a gauze dressing gets soiled from bath water or spills, change it immediately.
4. The outer part of a dressing should always be dry.
5. It helps to give a person their pain pill (prescribed by their doctor) about 30 minutes before changing a dressing.
6. Wash your hands for 15 seconds or disinfect, then dry.
7. You will need these supplies:
 - a. Sterile gauze: 4 X 4 gauze pads or ABD pads
 - b. Tape: adhesive, paper or non-allergenic
 - c. Plastic trash bag
 - d. Option: Antibiotic ointment or cream (ordered by the doctor) and Q tips (to apply ointment)
 - e. Option: fluid to cleanse the wound (as ordered by doctor or home health nurse): Normal saline, antiseptic swabs or soap and warm water.
 - f. Two Pairs of clean disposable gloves
 - g. Your Care diary
8. Have the person sit or lie down comfortably so you can easily reach the wound. Keep the person covered with a light blanket or towel. Expose only the wound area.
9. Place plastic trash bag in a place easy to reach.
10. Put on the pair of disposable gloves. Then look at the outside of the dressing.
 - a. Is there any drainage? If so, how large of an area on the gauze contains drainage?
 - b. What color is the drainage?
 - c. Do you notice an odor around the drainage?
11. Loosen the ends of the tape on the dressing. Take one hand and lightly apply traction to the skin away from the wound. Take the end of the tape on the same side with the other hand. Gently pull tape toward the dressing. Repeat until you remove each strip of tape. Then move hands and remove tape on the other side of dressing.
12. Lift the old dressing off, one layer at a time and place in the trash bag. Look at each layer to see if there is any drainage on the gauze and note the amount and color. Note how many squares of gauze contain drainage. How much of each gauze square contains drainage (such as 1 inch circle or 2 inch circle).
13. If the person has a drain or drainage tube **Be Very Careful**. Do not pull out the drain or tube as you remove the gauze. **If a drain or tube slips out, do not try to push it back in.**

14. If a dry gauze dressing sticks to the wound, do not remove it without moistening it first. If dry gauze sticks to a wound, pulling it off will remove the scab that is forming and reinjure the wound.
15. If the gauze sticks to a wound moisten it:
 - a. Pour a small amount of normal saline (about a tablespoon) right on the gauze.
 - b. Let it sit for a minute or two. Then gently remove the gauze.
 - c. You may need to moisten with the saline more than one time. Slowly apply gentle traction to the gauze to remove it without pulling off any scab that has formed
16. Once you remove all of the gauze, look carefully at the wound.
 - a. Does it appear different than last time?
 - b. Has the size of the wound changed? Gradually it will shrink.
 - c. If there are stitches, are they all in place?
 - d. Are the edges of the wound close together or open? The edges should be close together.
 - e. Is the skin around the wound reddened or swollen? Redness, swelling and some tenderness or normal for 2 to 3 days.
 - f. Take your finger and gently press over the skin around the wound, ask the person if that feels tender. A little tenderness is normal. Pain may indicate a problem.
 - g. Is there drainage coming from the wound, if so what color is it? Is there any odor? Drainage and odor may mean an infection.
17. Remove the gloves, place in trash page and wash or disinfect your hands.
18. Open up the gauze squares. Pull apart the paper covers and pull them straight out to create a surface for the gauze to lie on. Have the tape nearby.
19. Sometimes the doctor will have you clean the wound before placing the new gauze. If so, open the package or bottle of the cleansing fluid.
20. Apply a new pair of clean gloves.
21. Use the cleansing fluid recommended by your doctor or home health nurse.
 - a. Antiseptic Swabs:
 - i. If using antiseptic swabs, take the end of a swab and clean over the center of the wound, from one end to the other. Then discard the swab in the trash bag.
 - ii. Do not use a swab a second time to clean the wound. Throw it into the trash bag.
 - iii. Take a second swab and clean ½ inch to the side of the wound, from one end to the other. Repeat with a 3rd swab on the other side of the wound.
 - b. Normal Saline:
 - i. Pour a small amount of saline onto 2 or 3 dry gauze pads (opened and lying on inside of wrappers).
 - ii. Take one moist pad and clean over the center of the wound, from one end to the other.
 - iii. Discard the pad in the trash.

- iv. Use a new clean moist pad to cleanse along each side of the wound.
 - c. Soap and Water
 - i. Use a clean wash cloth and moisten in water.
 - ii. Wipe down the center of the wound and down each side, using a clean portion of the cloth each time.
- 22. Let the cleansing fluid dry. Or, use a clean dry gauze to gently blot it dry. Dry in the same way you cleansed the wound: dry down the center one end to the other, then on each side, using a clean gauze for each wipe.
- 23. If the doctor orders an antiseptic ointment or cream, place a small amount on the end of a Q tip and then apply it lightly over the wound surface in one swipe.
- 24. Cover the wound with new gauze. Place a square of gauze directly over the wound. Be sure to cover the entire wound. Overlap edges of the gauze by about 1 inch on each side.
- 25. Your home health nurse may recommend using a cover gauze, such as an ABD pad, for the final layer. An ABD prevents drainage from leaking through the gauze onto clothing.
- 26. Tape the gauze in place. Choose a size of tape that secures the dressing over the wound.
 - a. Place edges of the tape over several inches of skin on both sides of the dressing. Place the tape over the middle of the dressing.
 - b. Gently press the tape to secure it over the dressing, but do not place pressure directly on the wound.
 - c. Never place tape on broken or irritated skin.
 - d. Do not use adhesive tape if the patient is allergic to latex
- 27. Dispose of any paper wrappers or used gauze in the trash bag. Remove and dispose of the gloves and then wash or disinfect your hands.
- 28. Help the person sit up and get more comfortable
- 29. Make notes in your Care Diary about what you observed.