

what to expect: normal wound healing

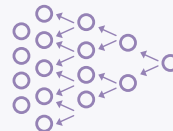
All wounds go through four stages of healing, called the four phases of wound healing. In week 1 and 2, phases 1 - 3 were explained. This indicated what is normal for you to experience with your wound during the first 2 weeks of healing:



Phase 1
Haemostasis



Phase 2
Inflammation



Phase 3
Proliferation

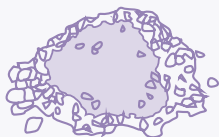


Phase 4
Remodelling

The final stage of wound healing phase 4 is remodelling. This means that the wound is healed and a scar is formed. The remodelling phase can take up to 2 years and depends on both the size and depth of the wound. Collagen continues to build and fill in the area, thus creating the scar.

Factors that affect wound healing explained

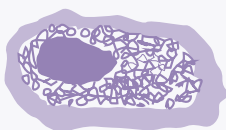
Most wounds will heal successfully. Some wounds may heal slowly due to factors that affect wound healing:



- **Nutrition – Discussed in week 3;** a healthy high protein diet is essential for wound healing and forming collagen. People with a more complex wound may also require nutritional supplements and may be seen by a dietician.



- **Oxygen** – A regular supply of oxygen to the healing tissue is needed. This may be affected by a list of medical conditions such as hypothyroidism, low blood pressure, venous disease and anaemia. If oxygen supply is reduced to the wound, this is called tissue hypoxia. It prevents both the formation of collagen (tissue) and the flow of oxygenated blood to the wound. This causes vasoconstriction, or a narrowing of the blood vessels, which delays wound healing.



- **Infection** – All wounds are contaminated with bacteria. Some wounds will become infected. This will depend on individual patient factors, such as the immune system. If the patient has normal host defences, the wound will heal effectively. It is important to recognise signs and symptoms of wound infection early and seek medical help.



- **Dry Skin** – People who are prone to dry skin (especially older people), are at risk of skin lesions, infection, and thickening due to scratching and rubbing the skin. This leads to difficulty for the skin to heal adequately.



- **Age** – Older people with aging skin will have a slower wound healing process. When we age, everything slows down. In addition, the skin becomes thinner and more fragile.



- **Obesity** – A patient who weighs 20% greater than their ideal body weight has a greater risk of infection leading to an interruption of the healing process.



- **Chronic health conditions** – These include many conditions which compromise wound healing, including diabetes mellitus, malnourishment, and immunodeficiency. Diabetes mellitus plays an enormous role in the healing process of wounds. It predisposes patients to wounds due to diminished sensation and poor arterial flow. It is vital to gain control of the blood glucose in the diabetic patient to promote wound healing.



- **Medications** – There are many medications that can compromise wound healing. Discuss with your healthcare professional whether your regular drugs will affect your wound and the healing process.

Smoking affects wound healing as it contributes to tissue hypoxia

Recognising why your wound is not healing

This advice is for all wounds:

Be aware that many chronic health conditions, especially diabetes mellitus can affect wound healing. In addition, many medications can affect wound healing.

Ask your healthcare professional for further advice as to whether your wound healing will be affected due to your existing chronic health conditions and medications.

Look out for signs of wound infection and seek immediate medical advice:

These include fever (a high temperature and feeling ‘fluey’), redness and swelling. Other symptoms include increasing pain, tiredness, loss of appetite and feeling low.

- Be aware of skin care and prevent dry skin – this will be covered in week 6.
- Try and improve general health, including stopping smoking and reducing weight – this will be covered in week 10.

week4:



Chemical exfoliators

Many over-the-counter creams and serums contain exfoliants. These substances are designed to help remove the outer layers of dead skin, in this way revealing a smoother appearance. While there are some claims that exfoliants can smooth fine lines, they may be beneficial for some types of scars and dark marks.



I used to be a very confident and outspoken girl however due to the bad scar which remained with me as a result of an accident – [Read Janice’s full story here.](#)

next week: *Pain and psychological aspects*

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