

When someone is **bleeding** at work, due to a recent, recurring or aggravated injury, they may or may not require first aid assistance, but in all cases safety precautions should be followed to minimize exposure risk to bloodborne pathogens.

This safety topic provides basic first aid guidance for injuries that are bleeding including minor cuts and abrasions, puncture wounds, severe bleeding and nosebleeds.

Using PPE is important to minimize the risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens. If there is blood or bodily fluids, always wear gloves and protective eyewear when giving first aid care.

- After providing any type of first aid, wash your hands immediately.
- All surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned and decontaminated after exposure to blood or bodily fluids.

When it comes to blood and bodily fluids, the best approach is to adopt the **Universal Precautions** to infection control. The concept of Universal Precautions¹ means that you should treat all blood and certain body fluids as if they were known to be infectious with bloodborne pathogens.

- The most important practical skill that you can use in a life-threatening emergency is to call 911 (or emergency services) and request assistance.



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The information provided in this safety topic is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice or formal first aid training.

Proper first aid treatment for **minor cuts, scrapes and abrasions** is important to promote healing and prevent infection. If you are providing first aid care to someone at work, or to yourself, for a minor cut, scrape or abrasion, these guidelines can help.

1. **Wash your hands.** This helps avoid infection. If you are assisting someone else with first aid, wear disposable gloves and protective eyewear.
2. **Stop the bleeding.** Apply gentle pressure with a clean bandage or cloth and elevate the wound until the bleeding stops.
3. **Clean the wound.** Rinse the wound with water. You can wash around the wound with mild soap, but don't get soap in the wound. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or iodine, which can be irritating. Remove any dirt or debris with tweezers that have been cleaned with alcohol. A doctor should be seen if all the debris cannot be removed.
4. **Apply an antibiotic** or petroleum jelly gently, in a thin layer, over the wound.
5. **Cover the wound.** Apply a bandage, rolled gauze or gauze held in place with paper tape. Covering the wound keeps it clean.



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- Adequate first aid supplies shall be available and accessible² in the workplace or at the job site.

After first aid care is provided for minor cuts, scrapes or abrasions, the dressing should be changed at least once a day and the injury should be monitored for signs of infection, like redness, warmth, swelling, pain, fever or drainage.

A **puncture wound** from a small object may not cause much bleeding, but these wounds can be deep and are at greater risk of infection. First aid for smaller puncture wounds is similar to first aid care for minor cuts and scrapes. To take care of a puncture wound:

1. **Wash your hands.** This helps avoid infection. If you are assisting someone else with first aid, wear disposable gloves and protective eyewear.
2. **Stop the bleeding.** Apply gentle pressure with a clean bandage or cloth.
3. **Clean the wound.** Rinse the wound with clear water for 5-10 minutes. A doctor should be seen if all the debris cannot be removed.
4. **Apply an antibiotic** or ointment, in a thin layer, over the wound.
5. **Cover the wound.** Apply a bandage, rolled gauze or gauze held in place with paper tape. Covering the wound keeps it clean.

After first aid care is provided, the dressing should be changed at least once a day and the injury should be monitored for signs of infection, like redness, warmth, swelling, pain, fever or drainage.



Seek immediate or emergency medical care if the wound is:

- still bleeding after a few minutes of direct pressure
- from an animal bite
- deep and dirty
- caused by a metal object
- over a joint and could be deep
- to the head neck, scrotum, chest or abdomen and could be deep

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For injuries that have **severe bleeding**, take these steps as you or other team members reassure the injured person.

1. **Grab the first aid kit** and PPE. Wear disposable protective gloves and protective eyewear.
2. **Remove clothing or debris** on the wound, but do not remove large or deeply embedded objects.
3. **Stop the bleeding.** Place a sterile bandage (or clean cloth) on the wound and apply constant pressure. Maintain pressure by binding the wound with a thick bandage. Do not put direct pressure on an eye injury or embedded object.
 - Do not remove the original gauze or bandage. If blood seeps through the gauze, add another bandage on top of it and keep pressing firmly on the area.
4. **Immobilize the injured body part** as much as possible. Wait for emergency personnel to arrive or get the injured person to an emergency room.



- For severe bleeding that you cannot control call 911 (or emergency services) immediately.



Getting a **nosebleed** at work is typically just a nuisance and not usually a medical emergency, however spilled blood from a nosebleed must still be handled as a bloodborne pathogen hazard. If someone at work gets a nosebleed and they become anxious, first aid guidance might be advised to help them through the situation.

To treat a nosebleed:

1. **Sit upright and lean forward.** By remaining upright, you reduce blood pressure in the veins of your nose. This discourages further bleeding. Sitting forward will help you avoid swallowing blood, which can irritate your stomach.
2. **Pinch your nose.** Use your thumb and index finger to pinch your nostrils shut. Breathe through your mouth. Continue to pinch for 10 to 15 minutes. Pinching sends pressure to the bleeding point on the nasal septum and often stops the flow of blood. If the bleeding continues, continue holding pressure another 10 to 15 minutes.

Seek immediate or emergency medical care for a nosebleed if:

- the bleeding lasts more than 30 minutes
- you feel faint or lightheaded
- the nosebleed is the result of a fall or head injury

Remember, after providing any type of first aid:

- Wash your hands immediately.
- Properly dispose of all hazardous waste.
- Clean and decontaminate all surfaces after exposure to blood or bodily fluids.



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FOOTNOTES

¹ OSHA Standard 1910.1030(d)(1) Universal Precautions

² OSHA Standard 1910.151(b) and OSHA Standard 1926.50(d)(1)

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