

Stages of Wound Healing

Wounds heal in stages. The smaller the wound, the quicker it will heal. The larger or deeper the wound, the longer it takes to heal. When you get a cut, scrape, or puncture, the wound will bleed.

- The blood will start to clot within a few minutes or less and stop the bleeding.
- The blood clots dry and form a scab, which protects the tissue underneath from germs.

Not all wounds bleed. For example, burns, some puncture wounds, and pressure sores do not bleed.

Once the scab forms, your body's immune system starts to protect the wound from infection.

- The wound becomes slightly swollen, red or pink, and tender.
- You also may see some clear fluid oozing from the wound. This fluid helps clean the area.
- Blood vessels open in the area, so blood can bring oxygen and nutrients to the wound. Oxygen is essential for healing.
- White blood cells help fight infection from germs and begin to repair the wound.
- This stage takes about 2 to 5 days.

Tissue growth and rebuilding occur next.

- Over the next 3 weeks or so, the body repairs broken blood vessels and new tissue grows.
- Red blood cells help create collagen, which are tough, white fibers that form the foundation for new tissue.
- The wound starts to fill in with new tissue, called granulation tissue.
- New skin begins to form over this tissue.
- As the wound heals, the edges pull inward and the wound gets smaller.

A scar forms and the wound becomes stronger.

- As healing continues, you may notice that the area itches. After the scab falls off, the area may look stretched, red, and shiny.
- The scar that forms will be smaller than the original wound. It will be less strong and less flexible than the surrounding skin.
- Over time, the scar will fade and may disappear completely. This can take as long as 2 years. Some scars never go away completely.
- Scars form because the new tissue grows back differently than the original tissue. If you only injured the top layer of skin, you will probably not have a scar. With deeper wounds, you are more likely to have a scar.

Some people are more likely to scar than others. Some may have thick, unsightly scars called [keloids](#). People with darker complexions are more likely to have keloids form.