



BASIC FIRST AID TIPS

Treating minor injuries at home

Minor injuries around the house are quite common. Knowing how to treat minor injuries can reduce the risk of complications such as infection.

Common minor injuries that occur at home include:

- Minor burns
- Sprains and strains
- Scrapes
- Nosebleeds
- Stings or bites from insects

REMEMBER

- **A basic first aid kit is essential for every home and car.** It will help you easily attend to unexpected minor injuries fast.
- Always have a list of [emergency numbers](#) close by for serious injuries.
- **DO NOT** put anything on an open wound, unless a registered healthcare practitioner has recommended or prescribed it.
- **Basic first aid is only for the treatment of minor injuries at home.** For serious injuries, contact emergency services or get to your nearest emergency medical centre immediately.
- **You must have first aid training to assist with serious injuries.** First aid training will also help you to recognise incidents like choking, heart attacks and strokes.

Minor burns

- **Pour cold water over the burned area** or place the area under a running tap for 5 minutes. **Do not use ice or ice water** as this can damage the skin tissue even further.
- **Do not apply butter, Vaseline or oily remedies** to burns. The grease in these products might slow the release of heat, and the retained heat can cause more damage.
- If the skin is unbroken after you have cooled it down, apply a burn shield then cover with gauze.
- **If blisters form, do not try to puncture them.**

Minor burns will usually heal without further treatment. If it does not heal in two weeks or you experience other symptoms, visit your nearest clinic or healthcare facility.

Sprains and strains

Sprains and strains are very common injuries, which may affect the soft tissue around joints and the mobility of a joint, ligament or muscle.

To treat a sprain or a strain think RICE:

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| R | EST - | Rest the injured area until it is less painful. |
| I | CE - | Wrap an icepack in a towel and place on the injured area for at least 20 minutes, four to eight times a day. |
| C | OMPRESSION - | Support the area by wrapping it with an elastic compression bandage. |
| E | LEVATION - | If possible, raise the affected area above heart level to reduce the swelling. |

If you suspect the bone may be broken, treat it the same as a sprain and go to your nearest emergency centre for treatment.

Bleeding from scrapes and falls

Kids get scrapes quite often and this occasionally results in mild bleeding. To treat the scrape, clean the area with water. You can also cover the area with an adhesive plaster. Mild bleeding will usually stop on its own, but more severe bleeds may need help to stop.

If a cut is bleeding a lot, cover the wound with gauze or a cloth and apply direct pressure to the wound. If the gauze or cloth becomes soaked, do not remove it, but rather apply more layers. The gauze or cloth will help the blood clot, which will stop the flow of blood. If you are unable to stop the bleeding, seek emergency medical treatment.

Care for nosebleeds

Some common causes of nosebleeds include:

- allergies
- dry or cold climates
- nose picking
- forceful nose blowing

The best way to help someone with a nosebleed is to:

- Have them sit and lean forward. Do not have them lean back as the blood will run down the throat.
- Firmly pinch the soft part of the nose just below the bridge (upper bony part) for a few minutes.

If the bleeding does not stop in five minutes, hold the position and continue pinching the nose. Seek medical attention if the bleeding persists or cannot be controlled.

Care for bee stings and insect bites

People react differently to bee stings and insect bites, and some people may be more prone to bites from fleas or mosquitoes.

Some insects bite/sting once, while others may bite or sting multiple times. Fleas, for example, may bite multiple times, while a mosquito might only bite once.

Insect bites and stings can cause skin irritations. You can treat insect bites by relieving the itch. Wash the area with soapy water and apply an antihistamine cream. Try not to scratch the bite as the skin can become irritated or break and become infected.

Care for bee or wasp stings

Bees and wasps are common in Cape Town. Stings or bites can range from painful but harmless to toxic and dangerous depending on whether the person stung is allergic or not.

It is important that people who are allergic to bee or wasp stings receive immediate medical attention if stung. For immediate help with bee or wasp stings, contact the 24-hour Poison Information Helpline on 086 155 5777.

If a wasp or bee stings you or someone you are with, follow the steps below to prevent further harm or injury:

- Move the person and yourself away from the hive or nest, if there is one
- Remain calm
- Determine any allergies and administer any prescribed medication for allergies
- Get the stinger out by scraping over it with a plastic card (like a credit card). **Do not use a tweezer as you might squeeze the stinger and release more venom**
- Avoid scratching the stung area
- Wash the area with soapy water
- Use a cold pack to reduce swelling at the site. Do not put the cold pack directly on the skin; rather wrap it in a cloth to keep the skin from freezing.
- An antihistamine tablet or syrup may help with the itching and swelling
- Bee stings can be very painful and painkillers may help reduce the pain. **Do not give a child any medication that contains Aspirin.**
- Look out for hives, redness or itching in other areas of the body
- Watch for shortness of breath – this may indicate anaphylaxis (an extreme or potentially life-threatening allergic reaction)
- Use an EpiPen to prevent anaphylaxis if there is a known allergy to bee stings. The EpiPen contains Epinephrine, a medication that treats severe allergic reactions. Call for emergency assistance if the condition does not improve.

Visit our [Care with bees and wasps](#) page to find out more about bee/wasp removal.