



# Cuts, Scrapes and Minor Injuries

Safety and Environmental Management System

SEMS 5-4

Report ALL injuries to your supervisor immediately, no matter how minor they seem!

Most of us have gotten cuts or scrapes at one time or another while doing our jobs and most of the time we shrug them off and keep working. However, even small cuts and scrapes require immediate attention before a problem develops that can't be ignored; possibly a life threatening infection or illness that could prevent work for a long time or even death.

It is surprising how many people get infections from untreated wounds, even with trained medical personnel located on most operations and first aid kits on every location. Many of us know people who have developed a serious infection that started as a small cut. Despite this knowledge, we often let wounds go without any kind of treatment.

Germs and bacteria (microorganisms that could cause disease) are all around us, on our tools, work tables, and even on our skin. They are always present, waiting for a chance to enter an open wound on the skin to start an infection. The two most common Infections resulting from small harmless looking cuts and scrapes are tetanus and septicemia.

Tetanus or "lockjaw" is a serious infection of the nervous system, caused when tetanus bacteria are introduced into the bloodstream by puncture, cuts, and fractures. The toxin (poison) produced acts on the motor nerves (those that cause movement) and causes severe muscle spasms, most frequently in the jaw and face. The disease can be treated with an antitoxin.

Septicemia or "blood poisoning" is an invasion of the bloodstream by bacteria. It results from an initial infection that the body's defenses are unable to control and which spreads throughout the body rapidly, causing a massive progressive infection. Symptoms include fever, chills, and skin eruptions. The condition is usually treated with massive doses of antibiotics.

PREVENTION is the best method of handling these problems. If a cut occurs, treat it immediately:

- Never put your mouth over a cut. The mouth contains germs.
- Do not breathe on the wound. (Why do surgeons wear masks?).
- Do not touch the wound with your fingers, an unclean cloth or handkerchief.
- Clean wound immediately with soap and warm water, and apply an antiseptic.
- Hold a sterile pad over the wound until it stops bleeding.
- Replace sterile pads and bandage as needed.
- Keep an eye on the injury for signs of redness or swelling

**THE KEY TO HANDLING OF MINOR CUTS OR SCRAPES IS TO NOT  
IGNORE THEM BUT TREAT IMMEDIATELY!**