

Gashes, cuts and stitches: When to come to the emergency room

Dr. Jean Martin, Director of the Emergency Department at Centennial Medical Plaza, treats many patients of all ages for gashes that require stitches. Dr. Martin says that “if the wound is gaping—that means, if you can squeeze the edges together—you need stitches. Your scar will be as wide as the skin tissue is separated. Stitches bring the skin together, so your scar will be much thinner than if you let the wound heal by itself.” Dr. Marin also says to trust your judgment about whether to come to the emergency room. If you’re in doubt, come in.

It can be hard to know which wounds can be treated at home and which require a trip to the emergency department.

These guidelines identify which wounds need emergency medical care:

- Wounds that won’t stop bleeding after five minutes of applying direct pressure
- Long or deep cuts that need stitches
- Cuts over a joint
- Cuts that may impair a body function, like on an eyelid or lip
- Cuts that remove all the layers of the skin—like those from slicing off the tip of a finger
- Cuts from an animal or human bite
- Cuts over a possible broken bone
- Cuts with an object embedded in them
- Cuts caused by a metal object or a puncture wound

Most cuts are minor, but should still be properly cared for to prevent infection:

- Clean the cut with soap and water.
- Treat the cut with an antibiotic ointment to prevent infection. Keeping it moist also decreases scarring.
- Protect the cut by covering it with a clean bandage.

Did you know Centennial Medical Plaza will come to your picnics and do free blood pressure screenings and health education? Call us at 303-699-3138 to get more information or to schedule your screenings.

Should you or your child ever need emergency care, you can rest easy knowing that **our 24-hour Emergency Department is nearby.** Our location is convenient – you will find us on the southwest corner of the Arapahoe Road and Jordan intersection in Centennial.

These health tips are brought to you by Centennial Medical Plaza. Reach us at 303-699-3060 or visit our Web site at www.centennialmedicalplaza.com.

