Community Wound Care for Street Outreach (Concise Version)

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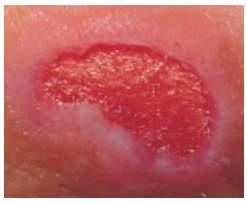
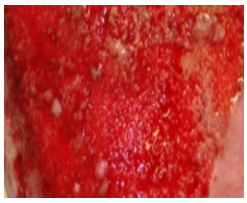
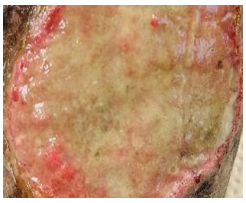
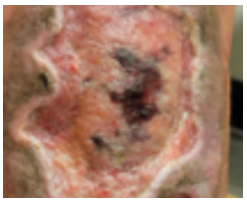
Chicago Street Medicine | Last Updated January 2026 (v1.4)

Identification

Epithelial	Granulation	Slough	Eschar/Necrotic	Deep/Ulcerations
				
• Pink • Looks like healing skin • Good sign	• Red, shiny, and bumpy • Generally good sign	• Yellow/gray and often soft or stringy • Dead tissue • Remove with dressing changes	• Hard and black • Often needs mechanical debridement (i.e. removal by specialist)	• Anything where putting a bandage on leaves a gap • Needs padding or packing

Materials List

Category	Item
Cleaning	Saline Soap & Water when accessible Nitrile gloves 4x4 Sterile gauze
Debridement	Medihoney
Packing	4x4 Sterile gauze
Primary dressing	Nonadherent dressing* (not Xeroform/petroleum gauze) Moistened saline gauze
Barrier for healthy skin	Petroleum jelly
Secondary dressing	Abd pad Kerlix gauze Plastic tape

*Covidien Curity brands are usually more affordable

When to Seek Care

Find a clinician or street medicine team for urgent care if…

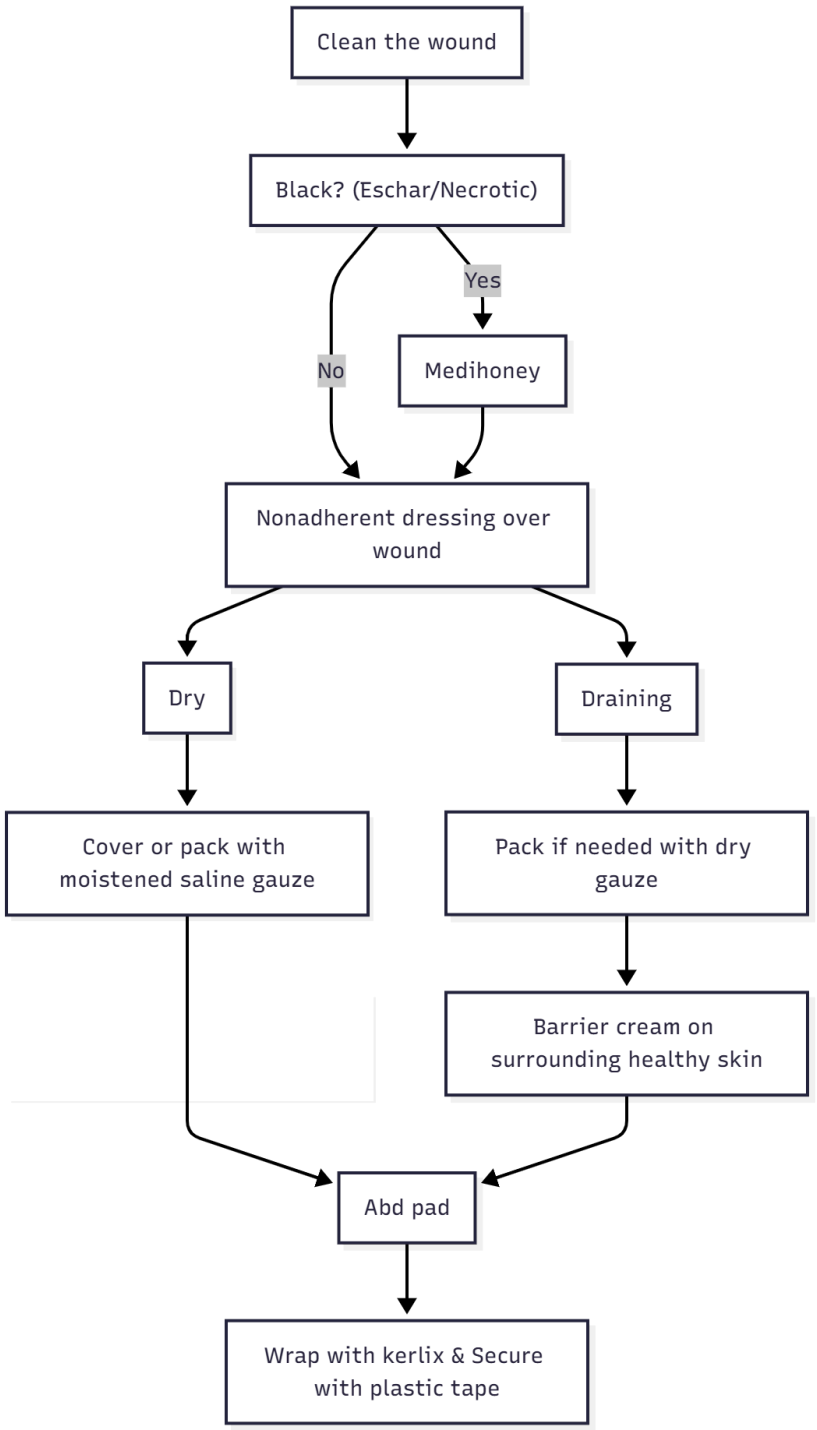
- Cellulitis (hot, red, more painful)
- Abscess (draining pus, bulging with fluid)
- Complicated
    - Fingers, toes, face, neck
    - A lot of black (necrosis)
    - Looks bad to you
    - Keeps getting deeper or worse

Find a wound care provider if eschar/necrotic or tunneling/undermining (skin and base separate in the edges of the wound or form a tunnel)

Seek emergency care (hospital ideally, street medicine team if unable) if…

- Fevers, chills, sweats, or other symptoms outside of wound itself
- Entire arm/leg becoming swollen
- Rapidly worsening
- Exposed bone, muscle, tendons

Low Barrier Care Flowchart



Comments

Clean

- Try to remove dead tissue as tolerated using cleaner and gauze

Debridement

- Medihoney (if available) can soften dead tissue and can help with debridement when a trained wound care specialist is not available

Dressing

- Nonadherent dressing
  - Helps dry wounds moisten & less painful when changing dressing
  - Draining wounds can drain through the dressing & also help with pain during dressing change (consider cutting slits in the nonadherent dressing before placing if draining heavily)
- If the wound is deep pack it with gauze:
  - For **dry** wounds use moist saline gauze. Make sure that the gauze is soaked but not dripping (i.e. wring the saline out after soaking)
  - For **draining** wounds use dry gauze. The nonadherent dressing will keep the gauze from sticking to the wound

Other Comments

- Try to give supplies to change dressing at least twice a week
- Advise people who inject drugs to avoid injecting into wound if possible & give harm reduction materials
- Advise people on when to seek further care