Caring for Wounds that Won’t Heal

Small cuts and scrapes can sometimes turn serious. If you are older or have certain health problems, such as diabetes or kidney disease, even small injuries can become a problem.

“Most wounds heal within weeks or months, depending on their size. But sometimes, a step in the process goes wrong,” says Mark Edelman, M.D., a board-certified plastic surgeon and medical director of the Wound Care Center at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. “A wound that won’t heal is called a chronic wound. Proper care is important to prevent more serious problems, such as infections that spread throughout your body.”

If you develop a chronic wound, you and your doctor can choose from many treatments. The new Wound Care Center at Memorial City is staffed by a multidisciplinary panel of affiliated physicians that specializes in the treatment of chronic nonhealing wounds on an outpatient basis using the latest advancements in wound therapy. If treatment fails to provide improvement, patients may be treated in pressurized chambers that deliver 100 percent oxygen, promoting tissue regeneration in wounds.

“Hyperbaric oxygen therapy, or HBOT, is a simple, noninvasive, painless treatment that enhances the body’s natural healing and strengthens the immune system, resulting in more rapid and complete healing for patients,” explains Dr. Edelman.

If you suffer from a chronic wound, take these steps between doctor visits to speed the healing process:

- Avoid harsh products, such as iodine, hydrogen peroxide and antiseptic solutions, to clean your wound.
- Use dressings to cover the wound and keep it moist. This helps speed healing.
- Protect sores on your feet from pressure by using special shoes, crutches or other equipment your doctor may recommend.
- Help leg sores heal by propping up your legs or wearing special stockings that put pressure on them. These measures improve blood flow and tame swelling.

Dr. Edelman is a board-certified plastic surgeon.
Specialized Surgical Treatment

Surgeons affiliated with the Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City specialize in surgery for heart valve disease and have successfully performed hundreds of operations involving the aortic, mitral and tricuspid valves. Their current rate of successful mitral valve repair is 95 percent. Mitral valve repair is preferable to replacement because of increased patient survival, freedom from reoperation and avoidance of the blood thinner Coumadin. In conjunction with valve surgery, the MAZE procedure is often performed to treat atrial fibrillation, a form of irregular heartbeat, which is highly associated with heart valve disease and stroke. In addition, the first aortic valve case in Memorial Hermann was performed at Memorial City using the new On-X valve, which eliminates the need for patients to take the drug Coumadin for the rest of their lives (pending U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval).

What Is Heart Valve Disease?

As the heart muscle contracts and relaxes, the valves open and close, letting blood flow into the ventricles and out to the body at alternate times. When these valves fail to open and close properly, the implications for the heart can be serious, possibly hampering the heart’s ability to pump blood adequately through the body.

The causes of heart valve damage vary depending on the type of disease present and may include the following:
- A history of rheumatic fever – a condition characterized by painful fever, inflammation and swelling of the joints
- Damage resulting from a heart attack
- Damage resulting from an infection
- Changes in the heart valve structure due to aging
- Congenital birth defect

Symptoms of Valve Disease

People with mild heart valve disease may not experience any symptoms. But it depends on the individual and the type of heart valve disease. The most common symptoms include:
- Chest pain
- Palpitations
- Migraine headaches
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Low or high blood pressure, depending on which valve disease is present
- Shortness of breath
- Abdominal pain due to an enlarged liver

Diagnosing and Treating Valve Disease

A doctor may suspect heart valve disease if he or she hears abnormal heart sounds through a stethoscope. To diagnose valve disease, a doctor may use such procedures as an electrocardiogram, echocardiogram, chest X-ray, cardiac catheterization and magnetic resonance imaging.

In some cases, the only treatment for heart valve disease may be careful medical supervision. But other treatment options include medication or surgery to repair or replace the valve. Current outcomes indicate that surgery is very safe and effective. In fact, with a greater than 95 percent success rate, surgery is now indicated much earlier in the development of the disease.

“In recent years, building on these high success rates, surgeons have been developing less invasive treatment options. These focus on techniques that provide access to the heart without cutting the ribs or breastbone,” says Michael Macris, M.D., a board-certified cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon affiliated with Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. “These minimally invasive techniques reduce recovery time and improve the patient’s ability to resume normal daily activities.”
New Program Helps Stop the Burn of GERD

No one wants to live with the heartburn that often comes with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). GERD is a problem with the esophagus, or the tube that connects the stomach to the mouth. A muscle at the bottom of the esophagus controls the flow of food in the body. Sometimes, the muscle doesn’t work properly and it causes food acid to come back up.

Seek Comprehensive Care
For GERD sufferers, a number of treatment options are available, from lifestyle changes to medication to surgery. The new Heartburn Treatment Program at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center offers comprehensive evaluation and treatment for GERD, combined with the latest in medical technology and personalized service. Our nurse coordinator helps guide each patient through the process beginning with a thorough evaluation, providing education and support along the way.

The program’s team of specially trained affiliated physicians from a variety of medical disciplines, including gastroenterologists and general surgeons, works collaboratively to review each case and make a recommendation on the best treatment option for each individual patient. Based on that recommendation, the nurse coordinator develops a customized care plan that may or may not include surgery.

Surgical Treatment for GERD
If that plan does include antireflux surgery, the procedure involves wrapping a part of the stomach around the muscle at the bottom of the esophagus. This helps strengthen the muscle so it can keep acid down.

“Gastric reflux surgery – or Nissen fundoplication – is considered an effective way to treat chronic heartburn and other GERD symptoms that can’t be relieved through lifestyle changes or medications,” says John Primomo, M.D., a general surgeon affiliated with Memorial City.

For gastric reflux surgery, surgeons use a small instrument called a laparoscope. The device has a camera on the end of it so doctors can see inside the abdomen. This method requires only a handful of tiny cuts, and reflux medication often is not needed after the operation.

Patients usually need to stay in the hospital for one to three days after surgery. They can go back to work within a few weeks. Postsurgical pain is usually mild.

Tips for Relieving GERD
Some lifestyle steps that can help relieve GERD include the following:

- Avoid chocolate, citrus fruits and juices, coffee, tomato products and alcohol – these are known to weaken the lower esophageal sphincter (LES).
- Decrease portions at mealtime so the stomach will require less acid to do its job.
- Avoid lying down for two to three hours after eating, allowing time for acid in the stomach to decrease.
- If you smoke, stop. Smoking weakens the LES.
- If you are carrying extra pounds, lose some weight; this may help reduce pressure on the LES.
- Elevate the head of your bed on 6-inch blocks or sleep on a specially designed wedge to allow gravity to lessen reflux.
Lack of Sleep Can Harm a Child’s Health

When children are young, we tuck them in at night and see them off to school in the morning. As they turn into teenagers, though, it gets harder to track how much time they actually spend asleep. But research shows we need to watch kids’ shut-eye at every age.

Sleep’s Deep Effects
As children grow older, they need fewer hours of sleep: 10 to 12 hours a night for preschoolers and at least nine for school-age children and teens. But the importance of sleep doesn’t diminish.

“Sleep helps us solve problems, react quickly, form memories and learn,” says Cindy Jon, M.D., a board-certified pediatrician affiliated with Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. “Inadequate sleep affects how well kids do in school. It also impacts a child’s physical wellbeing. The body releases hormones during sleep that aid growth, build muscles and repair cells and tissues.”

Childhood sleep deficiencies may be linked to future problems, too. Among them: decreases in mental functioning that begin as early as adolescence. Also, increasing evidence suggests that poor sleep contributes to major health problems, such as obesity.

What You Can Do
While parents are often involved in the sleep schedules of young children, they tend to step back in high school. But you should stay involved. First, recognize the signs that your child isn’t getting enough sleep. Two key signs: changes in mood and a slide in motivation. Sleepy teens have trouble waking up in the morning, are irritable late in the day, sleep extra long on weekends and doze off during the day.

Next, understand what’s keeping your teen awake. Many factors may play a role, and some – such as early school start times – you can’t control. But some you can. Here are some steps to help your child get a good night’s sleep:

• Encourage a consistent sleeping and waking schedule.
• Ban the use of computers, televisions, music players and phones close to bedtime.
• Help your kid create a good sleep environment – a place that’s quiet and dark.
• Limit teens’ caffeine intake, especially energy drinks.

“Sometimes, a sleep disorder is responsible for poor rest,” says Dr. Jon. “For example, sleep apnea causes pauses in breathing during sleep and leads to daytime tiredness. If you think a sleep disorder may be affecting your child, talk with a doctor.”

COULD YOUR CHILD HAVE A SLEEP DISORDER? Ask your pediatrician about a referral to the Pediatric Sleep Center. Or call 713.242.4447 for more information on a sleep study.

Center Brings Better Sleep to Kids
The Pediatric Sleep Center at Children’s Memorial Hermann Memorial City offers a multidisciplinary approach to the diagnosis and management of pediatric patients with restless sleep, snoring, gasping or pauses in breathing while asleep. It is one of the largest multibed facilities focused on children in the Gulf Coast region.

All procedures are performed according to the highest medical standards using appropriate technologies for the diagnosis and management of sleep-related disturbances. The pediatric patient rooms are specifically designed and equipped to perform sleep studies in a child-friendly environment, ensuring patient comfort and testing integrity.

Dr. Jon is a board-certified pediatrician.
Smoke Alarm: Are You At Risk for Lung Cancer?

Usually, the common cold or cough turns out to be nothing serious. But if you have been putting up with a cough for more than a few weeks, it may be time to see your doctor. Although the chronic cough is often a symptom of an allergy or a condition such as bronchitis, it could be one of the warning signs of lung cancer.

Who Is At Risk?
“The most significant risk factor for lung cancer is, of course, smoking,” says Muffaddal Morkas, M.D., a board-certified medical oncologist and hematologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. “Up to 90 percent of all lung cancers are thought to result from smoking. And it’s not just cigarette smoking. Daily cigar smoking also greatly increases risk. In addition, non-smokers who are frequently exposed to secondhand smoke face an increased risk.”

Other risk factors are:
• Exposure to asbestos, radon or ionizing radiation
• Lung scarring from chronic infections
• Family history of lung cancer

There is good news about lung cancer: It is potentially one of the most preventable cancers. Because smoking is its main cause, the best way to prevent lung cancer is simply to stay out of the smoke. Even if you have smoked for decades, stopping now can reduce your risk of developing lung cancer. Quitting also improves your chances of living longer, according to the National Cancer Institute.

The Importance of Early Detection
As with other types of cancer, early detection increases a patient's chance of survival. Unfortunately, lung cancer is difficult to detect in its earliest stages, and it often is not discovered until it has spread to other tissues or organs.

In its Aug. 4 issue, the New England Journal of Medicine published the results of the National Lung Screening Trial that showed a reduction in mortality from lung cancer as a result of screening with low-dose chest CT scans. However, screening is not yet recommended at this time until the data generated from this and other studies is evaluated further.

NOVEMBER IS LUNG CANCER AWARENESS MONTH. If you smoke, take the steps to stop. Talk with your doctor about cessation options. For a physician referral, call 713.222.CARE (2273).

It is best to see your doctor as soon as possible if you experience any of the warning signs of lung cancer. These symptoms include:
• Cough that does not go away
• Chest pain
• Hoarseness
• Weight loss and loss of appetite
• Bloody or rust-colored spit or phlegm
• Shortness of breath
• Fever without a known cause
• Recurring infections, such as bronchitis and pneumonia

Dr. Morkas is a board-certified medical oncologist and hematologist.
Memory Lapse or Something Serious? Some Clues to Go By

Which aisle stocks the peanut butter? Where is the project file? What's the name of that celebrity in the TV movie of the week? These are all questions that can unhinge our memory at times.

A little memory blip is nothing to worry about. We all have them now and then, especially if we are stressed or sad. However, some occurrences could signal a more serious memory problem. These include:

• Getting lost in familiar places
• Being confused about time or money
• Repeating questions or phrases in the same conversation
• Misplacing items
• Ignoring personal hygiene
• Forgetting to eat

Mind Your Memory
People are more likely to have memory problems as they get older. However, there may be some steps you can take to help protect your memory.

Some studies suggest regular exercise can help. A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that exercising three days a week for six months boosted memory in people ages 50 and older. However, the National Institutes of Health says that researchers still aren’t sure whether exercise can actually prevent cognitive decline.

Another tip: If you drink, do so in moderation. Too much alcohol can damage the brain.

When to Seek Help
“Memory problems that come with personality or behavior changes, like getting agitated easily, could be a sign of dementia,” says Joanne Kim, M.D., a board-certified neurologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. “Dementia isn’t a specific disease but rather a catchall term for a variety of symptoms, including memory loss, that affect the brain.”

Alzheimer’s disease is one type of dementia. It’s a serious problem that can lead to the gradual loss of brain functions that control language, thinking, movement and memory. Other types of dementia can be triggered by strokes or movement disorders, such as Parkinson’s disease.

If you’re concerned that memory problems are affecting you, see your doctor. Some types of memory problems can be slowed – or even stopped – with the right treatment.
EVENTS AND SCREENINGS

OB/Maternity Facility Tours
Tours of the facility are held regularly. Registration is required.

Razzle Dazzle ‘em Pink
Oct. 21, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
This breast cancer awareness luncheon benefits the Bobetta C. Lindig Breast Center at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. Catered by Westin Memorial City with entertainment by Geralyn Lucas, breast cancer survivor and author of Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy, this event will be emceed by CultureMap’s own Shelby Hodge. Location: Westin Memorial City, 945 Gessner Road. For more information or to purchase a ticket, call 713.242.4450 or email ramsey.howell@memorialhermann.org.

Superhero Day
Oct. 22, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Join Buddy and Topper as Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center and HEB host an enchanting and ever-so-adventurous Superhero Day for the little ones in your life. Every child who attends Superhero Day will have the opportunity to shake hands and take pictures with our local community superheroes (firefighters, emergency medical personnel, police officers and the Memorial Hermann Life Flight Team). We encourage all children to come dressed up in their favorite superhero outfit. To register for this FREE event, call 713.222.CARE (2273).

CLASSES AND SEMINARS

FREE NewStart Weight-Loss Surgery Seminars
Oct. 19 and 26; Nov. 1, 10, 16 and 30; Dec. 15 and 28
These seminars are for people morbidly obese with a body mass index of 30 or more who are interested in learning about metabolic and weight-loss surgery. To register, call 713.242.4600.

Orthopedic Joint Replacement Seminar
Nov. 2, 4 to 5 p.m.
Don’t let joint pain slow you down! Join us as Houston’s orthopedic experts affiliated with Memorial Hermann lead in-depth discussions on the latest minimally invasive options in arthroscopic and joint replacement surgery. Enjoy complimentary refreshments and appetizers. Location: Conference Center.

Breastfeeding Class
Teaches expectant parents techniques to make breastfeeding a successful, satisfying experience. Cost: $30 per couple.

CPR for Infants
Teaches basic techniques used in the event of foreign-body airway obstruction (choking) in infants. Cost: $15 per person, $30 per couple.

Education Class for New Cancer Patients
Held the fourth Thursday of every month, 1 p.m.

Look Good, Feel Better
Teaches beauty techniques to women cancer patients in active treatment to help them combat the appearance-related side effects of cancer treatment.

Newborn Care Class
Teaches prospective parents the fundamentals of infant care. Cost: $30 per couple.

Outpatient Yoga for Cancer Patients and Their Caregivers
Meets weekly. Call for days and times.

Prepared Childbirth Class
Prepares expectant parents for their childbirth experience. OB tour is included. Cost: $70 per couple.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Alzheimer’s
Meets the third Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. For more information, call 713.934.8844. Location: West Pavilion, Second Floor, Classroom A.

Better Breathers
Meets the second Wednesday of every month, 4 to 5 p.m. Call 713.242.3555 or 713.242.3190.

Breast Cancer
Meets the third Tuesday of every month, 6 to 7:30 p.m. For more details, call 713.242.3395. Location: West Pavilion, Main Conference Center.

Diabetes
Meets the second Thursday of the month, eight times per year, 7 to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 713.242.3890. Location: West Pavilion, Frostwood Boardroom.

General Cancer
Meets the second Monday, 6 to 7:30 p.m., and the fourth Monday of every month, 1 to 2:30 p.m. For questions, call 713.242.3508 or 713.242.3564. Location: Memorial Hermann Cancer Center-Memorial City.

Mended Hearts
Meets the fourth Tuesday of every month, 6 to 7:30 p.m. To learn more, call 713.242.3440. Location: West Pavilion, Main Conference Center.

Prostate Cancer
Meets the third Monday of every month, 6 to 7:30 p.m. For details, call 713.242.3564 or 713.242.3508. Location: Memorial Hermann Cancer Center-Memorial City.

Stroke
Meets the second and fourth Thursdays of every month, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Call 713.242.2906. Location: East Tower, Fourth Floor, Neuroscience Conference Room.

Weight-Loss Surgery
Meets the first Wednesday of every month, 7 to 9 p.m. Call 713.242.4600. Location: West Pavilion, Main Conference Center.

For more information on any of the events below, or to register, call 713.222.CARE (2273), unless otherwise noted.

OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH
Schedule your mammogram today. Tomosynthesis 3-D imaging is now available. Call 877.40.MAMMO (62666).
TUNE IN FOR THE HOUSTON HEALTH HOUR RADIO TALK SHOW! Set your radio dial to 700 AM KSEV from 1 to 2 p.m. every Monday and Tuesday for this LIVE radio talk show. Hosted by David Mobley, M.D., a board-certified urologist, and Sherri Levin, M.D., a board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist, the show invites listeners to phone in with health questions about various topics and specialties. Don’t miss this wonderful opportunity to have a FREE visit with a doctor on the radio! Call in questions to 281.558.5738 or *KSEV (*5738) for Verizon Wireless users. For Internet users, log in and listen at www.ksevradio.com.

Dr. Mark Edelman is a board-certified plastic surgeon. He attended medical school at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and completed his residency at St. Louis University School of Medicine. Dr. Edelman serves as medical director of the Wound Care Center at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center.

Dr. Cindy Jon is a board-certified pediatrician, pediatric pulmonologist and sleep medicine specialist. She received her medical degree from The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, completing her residency and fellowship training at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Dr. Jon is an assistant professor with the department of Pediatrics at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, and her focus is on children with asthma and respiratory and sleep complaints.

Dr. Michael Macris is a board-certified cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon. He attended Harvard University and received his medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia. He completed his residency at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and the Texas Heart Institute in Houston. Following experience as an assistant professor with the department of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, Dr. Macris began private practice in 1996.

Dr. John A. (Tony) Primomo is a general and bariatric surgeon. He attended medical school at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and completed his residency at the University of Rochester, N.Y. Dr. Primomo’s fellowship focused on minimally invasive and bariatric surgery at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Dr. Primomo received additional fellowship training in advanced laparoscopic surgeries to include treatment for reflux disease.

Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center
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