Measuring Wounds Correctly
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Wound measurements are essential elements in the evaluation of wound healing progress.

Health care professionals use wound measurements to communicate how the wound is healing, which leads to better outcomes. The continued communication allows us to see if the path we are on is right and benefiting the patient or wrong and not working. If it's not working, we need to change the plan of care until we find the solution that helps improve the patient's condition.

There is not one single method of measuring wounds. There are several methods that are accurate and available. Whichever method your facility chooses to use, make sure you educate the staff and use the method consistently. The most common method is linear measurement, also known as the "clock" method. Imagine the body as the face of an imaginary clock, the head is 12:00 and the feet are 6:00.

Length is measured by placing the ruler at the point of greatest length or from 12:00 to 6:00. Width is measured by placing the ruler at the point of greatest width or from 9:00 to 3:00. When measuring depth, measure the deepest part of the wound. The most common way to measure depth is to insert a cotton-tipped applicator into the wound bed and place a mark on the applicator at the level of the skin. The cotton-tipped applicator is then held against a ruler to determine the measurement of depth.
Measuring **tunneling** and **undermining** is also essential when measuring wounds.

- Tunneling is a passageway under the surface of the skin that is generally open at the skin level; however, most of the tunneling is not visible.
- Undermining is a closed passageway under the surface of the skin that is open only at the skin surface. It involves a significant portion of the wound edge.

To measure undermining, check at each area or "hour" of the clock around the wound. Measure the undermining by inserting the cotton tip applicator into the area of undermining and grab the applicator at the wound edge. Measure the applicator against the ruler. When measuring undermining, use ranges. For example, if the undermining is 2 cm from 12:00 to 3:00, document it that way.

To measure tunneling, insert the cotton tip application into the tunnel. Grab the applicator at the wound edge and measure it again the ruler. The clock method is also used as reference when documenting the location of the tunnel.

In conclusion, wound measurements are essential elements in the evaluation of wound healing progress and being consistent is very important.


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