About Wound Care

Methods of Healing
Wounds can heal by a traditional method of healing where the wound is allowed to dry out or by moist wound healing which uses wound fluid to assist healing. It is advisable to consult with a healthcare professional when trying to heal wounds.

Traditional Healing
An exposed wound or a wound without a moisture retaining dressing can dehydrate and form a scab. The result is a loss of living cells. The scab blocks new skin cell movement across the surface of the wound. Instead of the new cells gliding across the top of the wound, the new cells must ‘burrow’ underneath the scab to find a moist surface over which to grow. This process consumes extra energy and the wound can take longer to heal.

An exposed wound also experiences a lower surface temperature so cells do not work efficiently and healing is slowed.

A traditional dressing such as gauze allows the wound to dry out. As a result, the dried wound fluid (exudate) often sticks to the dressing. When the dressing is removed, it is often stuck to the surface of the wound, tearing not only the scab and dried fluid but also the new cells that are trying to heal the wound underneath the scab.

Moist Wound Healing

"Moist Wound Healing" is the name given to the process of controlling the wound environment to enhance the healing through the use of moisture. All body cells must have moisture to function effectively. Cells involved in wound healing function faster and more efficiently in a moist wound environment.

In 1962, George Winter discovered that a wound under an occlusive (blocking) dressing healed twice as fast compared to one that was allowed to develop a scab. This was to become the foundation for the concept of moist wound healing and the science of modern wound management.

A moist wound environment is provided through special dressings, which allow cells to be bathed in wound fluid so that they do not dry out and form a scab. This makes the epithelial cells migrate across the surface of the wound rather than underneath the scab. The retained wound fluid provides nutrients and growth factors to assist with healing. There are also white blood cells present in the fluid to help prevent infection. Nerve endings are bathed in wound fluid helping to reduce pain as nerve cells are stimulated in a dry environment.