



Sample of various dressings used for wound care.

## Wound Care: A Specialized Area of Expertise

In recent years, wound care has become highly varied and specialized, requiring specific training to obtain wound care certification. Medical professionals attend a four-day intensive study program, taking the rigorous national exam on the fifth day. Those who pass the exam obtain a five-year certification.

Wound care is needed in a variety of situations, including post surgical care, where infection is a concern, serious injury, inhibiting the patient's ability to care for the wound, and chronic wounds, such as those obtained due to the physical confinement of a wheelchair or bed. In addition, some wounds have difficulty healing due to diet, environment or chronic diseases such as diabetes. In these and other situations, the skills of a certified wound care nurse are vital to a patient's healing and restored health.

With the referral of a doctor, [Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice](#) will initiate the home care process with an admission visit. During this first home visit, nurses take a holistic approach to the patient's overall health, considering the environment for healing, the patient's diet, support available to the patient and the specific wound care needs. Often the implications of wounds create needs in other areas of a patient's life and the nurse will try to provide solutions in all areas that will facilitate healing for the patient. This holistic approach is an important asset of the home visit, providing additional information about a patient's lifestyle that doctors are unable to consider.

Today, there are many different techniques utilized in wound care, including over 100 types of dressings. For many years, doctors recommended a wet to dry dressing, which allowed the wound's moist healing environment to dry out and often stick to the bandage, causing trauma to the wound. New techniques that recognize the importance of a moist and warm environment for healing offer different methods. Silvasorb gel uses silver to keep the wound warm and hold moisture in, while keeping bacteria out. This is considered a primary dressing because it is applied directly to the wound. Foam dressings, which are considered secondary, are applied over the primary dressing to keep

## Wound Care From a Patient's Perspective



Eight years ago, Tabitha Walker of Newbury sustained a permanent spinal cord injury in an accident which requires her to be in a wheelchair. With many challenges faced by Tabitha as she has adapted to her life since the accident, one was a pressure wound she had for nearly two years that would not heal. Several approaches were tried using different techniques and providers, with little success. Then, other events in Tabitha's life took her attention away from her wound: first her father died, and then she was hospitalized with a serious blood infection. After finally coming home from the hospital, Dr. Donald Eberly recommended that Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice provide services for Tabitha. The day Tabitha met Tammy Freckleton, RN and wound care specialist at Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice, was the beginning of a remarkable turnaround. "Tammy knew just



Tammy Freckleton, RN, proudly displays her Wound Care certificate.

the wound clean, secure and dry. Transparent dressings are used for a similar purpose and can be left in place up to seven days. This is advantageous because changing a dressing allows its temperature to decrease, causing the body to have to reheat the wound and therefore, slowing down the healing process considerably. Skilled and certified nurses specialize in finding the delicate balance necessary, in the temperature and moisture level of a wound that will promote healing.

Tammy Freckleton, who has been an RN for 11 years and certified in 2008 for wound care, has a passion for her work and her patients. Utilizing an empathetic and holistic view of her patients and their environment, she strives to recognize and provide solutions to all the needs of the patient that will enable healing. "The wound environment is like a party ...you need the right party favors for success!" says Freckleton. She also recognizes the patient's need to be in control of their own healing process saying, "If a patient does not trust her nurse, she will never be able to trust her nurse's choices and recommendations". The most rewarding part of her job is the unique capability to witness both the beginning and the end of the healing process. Healing comes as an affirmation of her choices and techniques applied by her skills and training. "It is so rewarding to see my techniques and skills come together to make a person's life better. I especially want to thank Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice for giving me the opportunity to expand my clinical knowledge and do this work" says Freckleton.

#### **A PHYSICIAN PERSPECTIVE: DONALD EBERLY, MD**

"We are seeing more and more complex skin wounds today, clearly related to other health issues so frequently noted in the news - rapidly evolving strains of highly virulent bacteria which are resistant to currently available antibiotics, increasing incidence of diabetes, vascular disease and obesity. These factors, combined with our older population and more surgical procedures directed toward reversing some of those effects of aging like joint replacement present wounds that can take weeks to months to heal. In the past, an open wound might require prolonged hospitalization to provide the attentive care necessary to heal. But the hospital environment is costly and can be a somewhat hostile bacterial environment that can delay healing. Now, with expert, specialty trained wound care nurses available for home care, patients with these complex wounds can return to the safe and familiar environment of their home sooner, receive competent, consistent attention and heal their wounds faster than if they were to remain hospitalized. It's remarkable and a pleasure to see how much faster patients heal from both the physical and emotional stresses of an illness when cared for in their own homes."

how to approach me. She gave me choices and was always encouraging" says Walker. When other providers told Tabitha that she would require bed rest for most of the day in order for her wound to heal, Tabitha became angry. "I have a 10 year-old son. I could not stay in bed all day." So Tabitha, who admits she can be stubborn and easily discouraged, did not follow this recommendation. Then came Tammy. "Tammy had a different approach. She suggested I try to rest in bed for 20 minutes every day and see how that goes. She seemed to understand right away that pushing me too hard does not motivate me, but that I need to take smaller steps with lots of encouragement along the way" says Walker. "Tammy is also a highly skilled and educated professional who is not afraid to try new things to keep me motivated and hopeful. It might be using a different dressing, or something silly like the 'cell dance' visualization" says Walker. Tammy told Tabitha to imagine cells dancing across the wound to help it heal, and would do little cell dance with her hands. "Her enthusiasm and positive attitude are contagious. She reassured me and praised me for every positive step I took. She really is awesome." After struggling with her wound for 2 years, it was nearly healed 2 months after Tammy Freckleton met Tabitha, a remarkable outcome. Tammy's expertise, coupled with a strong bond of mutual respect and affection, resulted in both patient and staff satisfaction.



**CLICK HERE** to visit the Wound Care Education Institute web site and learn more about the wound care certification exam.

How much do you know about wound care? **CLICK HERE** to take our True/False quiz and find out.



Copyright 2008 Lake Sunapee Region Visiting Nurse Association | [Notice of Privacy Practice](#)  
P.O. Box 2209 | 107 Newport Road | New London, NH 03257 | Email [info@lakesunapeevna.org](mailto:info@lakesunapeevna.org)

[Remove yourself from this mailing.](#)

[Remove yourself from all mailings from Lake Sunapee Region VNA.](#)