



# How to Apply Different Types of Bandages

Expert  
Reviewed

Five Methods: [Applying a Strip Bandage](#) [Applying a Wrap/Elastic Bandage](#) [Learning the Basics of Bandaging](#) [Bandaging a Minor Wound](#)  
[Bandaging Serious Wounds](#)

Do you need to bandage a wound or injury? Most standard first aid kits come with sterile gauze pads, absorbent bandages, adhesive tape, roller bandages, and a triangular bandage, as well as regular adhesive bandages. In an emergency, you can use any clean, absorbent material as a bandage. Applying bandages for deep cuts, treating severe puncture wounds, and dealing with burns and protruding bones all entail slightly different techniques. Make sure you know the right way to proceed before you apply a bandage.

Method  
1

## Applying a Strip Bandage

- 1 Know when to use strip bandages.** Strip bandages come in a variety of sizes and types. These bandages are ideal for covering small cuts and scrapes and minor wounds. These bandages are particularly effective for use on wounds on your hands and/or fingers, as they easily cover small cuts while staying firmly attached when applied to unusual angles.<sup>[1]</sup>
- 2 Choose a size.** Strip bandages come in single-size packs and multi-packs with many sizes. Whenever selecting a strip bandage, make sure the padded gauze part of the bandage is larger than the wound itself.
- 3 Remove the packaging.** Most strip bandages, made up of an elastic or cloth adhesive sticker over a small bit of gauze, come packaged individually. Remove the bandage from the packaging and remove the coverings on the adhesive part of the bandage before trying to apply it.<sup>[2]</sup>
- 4 Place the gauze over the wound.** Strip bandages have a small piece of gauze centered in piece of adhesive tape. Place the padded gauze section of the bandage directly over the wound. Be careful not to apply the adhesive tape part of the bandage to wound, as this can open your cut when removing the bandage.<sup>[3]</sup>
  - If necessary, you can apply a small amount of anti-bacterial ointment to the gauze pad before applying the bandage to the wound.
  - Try to avoid touching the gauze with your fingers so that you don't transfer any dirt or germs to the bandage.
- 5 Firmly attach the adhesive.** Once you have covered the wound with the gauze part of the bandage, gently stretch the adhesive tape part of the bandage and attach it firmly to the skin surrounding the wound. Make sure there is no slack or any gaps in the adhesive tape so that the bandage stays securely in one spot.<sup>[4]</sup>
- 6 Change regularly.** You will want to remove and replace the strip bandage regularly. When changing the bandage make sure to clean and dry the wound thoroughly and allow it to be exposed to the air for a few minutes before reattaching a replacement bandage. Take care not to allow any tugging or pulling on the wound itself when removing a bandage.<sup>[5]</sup>
  - You should replace strip bandages anytime they get wet. Also, you will want to change the bandage as soon as the gauze pad becomes soaked with fluid draining from the wound.<sup>[6]</sup>

Method  
2

## Applying a Wrap/Elastic Bandage

- 1 Know when to use elastic/wrap bandages.** When a wound is too large to cover with a strip bandage, it is best to cover the wound with gauze and an elastic/wrap bandage. These bandages are ideal for larger wounds on the extremities, like the arms or legs, because the bandage will wrap neatly around the limb.<sup>[7]</sup>

**2 Secure the gauze.** Elastic/wrap bandages are not designed to cover the wound. You will need to apply sterile gauze to wound itself before applying the bandage. Make sure the gauze covers the entire wound. It is better to use gauze pads that are slightly larger than the wound.<sup>[8]</sup>

- If necessary, you can apply tape to the outside of the gauze pad itself to hold it place until you cover it with an elastic bandage.
- Again, you can apply a medicated ointment to the pad to help disinfect and heal the wound.

**3 Wrap the elastic bandage.** Once the gauze pad is in place, you need to wrap up the area with the elastic bandage. Start by wrapping the bandage below the wound. Moving upwards, apply the bandage, covering at least half of the applied bandage with each new pass. You will be done when you have applied the bandage to a spot above the wound.<sup>[9]</sup>

**4 Fasten the bandage.** Now that the elastic/wrap bandage has been applied, you need to fasten it. This can be done a number of ways. You can use tape or clips to hold the end of the elastic bandage in place. Make sure the bandage is not too tight before securing the end of the bandage.<sup>[10]</sup>

**5 Change regularly.** In order for the wound to drain and heal, you need to remove the elastic bandage from time to time. Every time you remove the bandage, be sure to thoroughly clean and dry the wound, allowing it to sit in the open air for a few minutes. As a general rule, you will need to change the bandage at least once a day or when drainage from the wound soaks through the gauze pad.<sup>[11]</sup>

Method  
3

### Learning the Basics of Bandaging

**1 Understand the purpose of a bandage.** While many people think that bandages are used to stop bleeding or infection, they're actually used to hold a dressing in place. Bandages come with a small bit of dressing attached (like a band-aid) or are put over the top of a separate piece of sterile dressing. This is important to note, because if you simply put a bandage over a wound without dressing, the wound will continue to bleed and can become infected. Never put a bandage directly over a wound.

**2 Avoid bandaging too tightly.** If you've ever been on the receiving end of an overly-tight bandage, then you know the discomfort it can cause. If a bandage is attached too tightly, it can cause more damage to the wound/body and cause discomfort/pain to the wearer. A bandage should be applied tight enough so that the dressing doesn't become exposed or become loose, but loose enough that it does not restrict blood flow.<sup>[12]</sup>

**3 Use a bandage for breaks and dislocations.** Not all bandages have to be used for wounds; you can use a bandage for broken bones and dislocations as well. If you experience injuries like a fractured bone, dislocated arm, eye problems, or another internal injury, you can use a bandage to support and secure it. The only difference with bandaging internal injuries is that you don't have to use any gauze/dressing. A special type of bandage is used for these injuries (as opposed to a band-aid or similar bandage). Typically a triangle bandage, t-shape bandage, or bandage tape is used for support.<sup>[13]</sup>

- Any suspected fractures or dislocations can be supported in this manner until you see a doctor.

**4 Know when to seek medical attention.** Bandaging minor wounds is appropriate for home treatment, but if you ever experience a serious wound, you should bandage it as a way to protect the wound until you can seek proper medical attention. If you're not sure whether your wound/injury constitutes a "serious injury," you should call your local nurse hotline and ask for advice.<sup>[14]</sup>

- If you bandage a wound and it has still not begun to heal or causes significant pain after 24 hours, you should head to a doctor for help.
- If a wound is larger than 3cm, has loss of skin and/or involves underlying tissues, it is best to seek medical aid.

**5 Clean and treat wounds prior to bandaging.** If you're not in an emergency situation or a rush, you should always take time to thoroughly clean a wound prior to bandaging it. Use water to rinse a wound clear of debris, and a soap or disinfectant to kill any bacteria. Pat the wound dry, and apply an antiseptic cream to prevent infection.

The dressing and bandage should be applied over the top of this.<sup>[15]</sup>

- If there is any debris around the injury, use gauze to wipe away from the injury in a star pattern before rinsing. This helps keep the water from rinsing particulates into the wound.

#### Method 4

### Bandaging a Minor Wound

- 1 Use a strip bandage for small cuts.** The most common type of bandage is a strip bandage — usually known as a Band-Aid, which is actually a brand name. These are best for use on small cuts and abrasions that occur on a flat surface. To apply, simply remove the wax-paper backing and position the gauze-portion over the wound. Use the sticky wings to secure the bandage, being careful not to pull them too tight or the bandage will peel off.<sup>[16]</sup>
- 2 Use a knuckle bandage for finger and toe wounds.** A knuckle bandage is a special adhesive bandage shaped like an "H." This makes it easy to apply to cuts and abrasions between your fingers or toes. Peel off the wax paper backing and then position the wings to go between the fingers/toes, with the center piece located over the wound. This will help the bandage to stay in place for longer. This is important because wounds between the fingers and toes are in a frequently moved area of the body.<sup>[17]</sup>
- 3 Use a butterfly bandage for slices and cuts.** A butterfly bandage can be recognized by two sticky adhesive strips connected by a thin, non-sticky strip of bandage. This style of bandage is used for keeping a cut closed, not for absorbing blood or preventing infection. If you have a slice or cut that can be "pulled apart," you may consider using a butterfly bandage. Peel off the backing, and then place the bandage so that the sticky parts are on either side of the cut. Pull the closure a bit tight to help close off the cut. The non-sticky center strip should be located directly over the wound.<sup>[18]</sup>
  - A piece of sterile gauze secured with tape should be placed over the butterfly closure for at least the first 24 hours to help prevent infection while the cut seals itself.
- 4 Use gauze and adhesive tape to bandage a burn.** If you experience a **minor burn** (symptoms including redness, swelling, slight pain, and the affected area is no larger than 3-inches wide), you can treat it at home with basic bandaging. Use a piece of sterile, ideally nonstick gauze (as even minor burns can blister or open unexpectedly), to cover the burn. Then, use adhesive bandage tape to secure the gauze in place. The adhesive bandage should not come in contact with the burn at all.<sup>[19]</sup>
- 5 Use moleskin to bandage a blister.** **Moleskin** is a special type of foam-adhesive bandage used to prevent a blister from being rubbed. Moleskin is typically doughnut shaped, with a cut-out in the center for placement over the blister. Remove the backing of the moleskin round, and place it so that the blister sits inside the cut-out. This will prevent rubbing and relieve pressure. you can place a strip bandage over the top of the moleskin to prevent infection, should the blister pop.
  - You can make your own makeshift moleskin by taking layers of gauze slightly taller the blister is high and cutting a hole out of them just a touch larger than the blister. Center this on the site, then add a piece of nonstick gauze overtop and tape in place.

#### Method 5

### Bandaging Serious Wounds

- 1 Use a pressure bandage.** For serious cuts and abrasions, use a pressure bandage. A pressure bandage is a long piece of thin gauze with a thick piece of padded gauze located near one end. The padded gauze is placed over the wound and the thin strip is wrapped around it to apply pressure and secure it in place. This is best used to prevent heavy bleeding from a wide cut or abrasion. You can use adhesive tape to secure the end of the gauze in place.<sup>[20]</sup>
- 2 Use a doughnut bandage.** You can use these bandages for impalements and puncture wounds. If you have a wound that contains a foreign object, like a shard of glass, a piece of wood, or a piece of metal, you need to use a doughnut bandage. A doughnut bandage is a thick, "O" shaped bandage that relieves pressure around an impaled

object or deep puncture. Leave the impaled object in place (do not attempt to pull it out!) and place the bandage around it. Then, use adhesive gauze tape or gauze wrapped around the edges of the doughnut to hold it in place. Do not wrap any gauze or tape over the center of the doughnut where the impaled object is located.<sup>[21]</sup>

- You can make your own doughnut bandage by rolling a triangle bandage/sling into a tight, snakelike coil, then making a loop the size required to support the impaled object. (Loop it around a finger, fingers or hand as a mold.) Then take the loose, coiled ends of the bandage and lace them through your loop, around the outer side and back through the loop. Tuck the tips of the bandage back into the doughnut shaped structure to secure them. In this way, you can make support structures for a wide range of injuries.

**3 Use a triangle bandage.** To secure a dislocated or broken bone, a [triangle bandage](#) is ideal. This small-looking bandage unfolds into a large, triangle-shaped bandage. It is used by folding it into a shape, and then using it to support a fractured or dislocated bone. Fold the triangle up into a long rectangle and tie it in a loop to create a sling. Alternatively, you can wrap it around a splint/bone to provide support. The uses of the triangle bandage will vary based on the injury, so use your discretion.<sup>[22]</sup>

**4 Use gauze rolls.** To bandage [second degree burns](#), use gauze rolls. Second degree burns cover an area wider than 3-inches and are blistered, red, swollen, and painful. While you should never attempt to bandage a [third-degree burn](#), you should use gauze to bandage a second-degree burn. Wrap the sterile gauze loosely around the wound, and secure it with tape. The gauze will help block out irritants and infection, without cutting off circulation or applying pressure to the burn.<sup>[23]</sup>

**5 Use a tensor bandage.** On a deep cut or accidental amputation, tensor bandages are ideal. Tensor bandages are made of a thick elastic that helps to apply heavy pressure to severe bleeding. If you have a deep cut or [accidental amputation](#), remove as much of the blood as possible, and then apply a thick layer of sterile gauze. Wrap the tensor bandage around the gauze to secure it in place and apply pressure to help minimize the bleeding.<sup>[24]</sup>

- Try to position the injured area above the heart before bandaging, as this reduces blood flow and risk of shock. It also makes the tensor easier to apply.

## Community Q&A

### How do you apply a bandage to an amputation stump?



Jonas DeMuro,  
M.D.

This is a definite challenge, as bandages tend to fall off. The best way is a first layer of cover roll (2-inch), followed by a second layer with an elastic bandage under a small amount of tension. Also, overlap the passes of the bandage for even coverage to help it stay on.

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### What type of gauze should I have in a first aid kit?



wikiHow  
Contributor

You can buy rolled gauze, or individually wrapped sterile squares. Go to your drugstore and they will have a variety.

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### For the elderly who fall and break skin apart, with the center of the wound bleeding, should the wound be completely covered with a waterproof bandage and left on for 10 days?



wikiHow  
Contributor

No, the best thing to do is to put a bandage on during the day with a cream to stop infection, then leave the cut open at night.

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### Can you answer these readers' questions?

Refresh

On **How to Obtain a Conceal Carry Permit Arkansas**, a reader asks:

I am retired military. Do I still have to wait 90 days when I move to Arkansas?

Your answer...

Reply

On **How to Use ADP for Payroll**, a reader asks:

How do you get your first check number

Your answer...

Reply

On **How to Scan Photos**, a reader asks:

Can you use the ADF (the feeder for copying and faxing) to scan?

Your answer...

Reply

## Tips

- Be on the lookout for infection. If you notice a grayish or yellow, foul-smelling discharge coming from the wound, or your temperature rises above 100 degrees Fahrenheit (or 38 degrees Celsius), if there is intense throbbing or redness at the site or red streaks radiating from the site, seek medical attention.
- Only use tweezers to remove debris from a wound if medical attention is not coming immediately. Otherwise, wait and let the professionals handle it.
- Know how to treat **shock**. Shock can occur when someone suffers a severe injury, and can be fatal if left untreated. The chief indicator of shock is skin that becomes pale, cold and clammy. Place the patient on his or her back and lift the legs up, keeping them bent at the knee. If possible wrap the patient in a warm blanket, taking extra care to cover extremities. Speak in a soothing, calm voice and ask the patient open-ended questions to keep him or her talking (such as, "What's your name?" or "How did you meet your spouse?"). Call for medical help immediately.
- Keep a **first aid kit** handy. The injuries in this article can be effectively treated using only the bandages in a standard first aid kit. Know where the kit in your office is located, and keep one in your **home** and your **car**.
- For a severe wound, always make controlling the bleeding your first priority. Infections can be treated later.
- If you have a big scrape on an area that won't bandage easily (such as a knee or elbow), try applying a liquid bandage. You can purchase liquid bandage products at your local drugstore.
- Individually wrapped gauze pads, as well as the gauze pads on adhesive bandages, are sterile. Try to avoid putting your fingers on the area you'll be applying to the wound if possible.

## Warnings

- Using hand sanitizer on open wounds is dangerous. Do not, under any circumstance, use hand sanitizer as a replacement for water to clean a wound.
- Bandaging for severe injuries is only a temporary precaution. Once you have the bleeding under control, do everything possible to make sure the patient receives prompt medical attention.

## Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.firstaidguide.net/skin-closure-strips/>
2. <http://www.firstaidguide.net/skin-closure-strips/>
3. <http://www.firstaidguide.net/skin-closure-strips/>

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