

Healing Kids' Cuts

A kiss and a cute bandage are often all you need to take care of a boo-boo, but sometimes it takes a little more know-how to help wounds heal.

MYTH | Clean a cut with hydrogen peroxide.

► **TRUTH |** Hydrogen peroxide can actually be toxic to the healing cells in a wound. "Parents often think that it's doing its job because it bubbles a bit when it hits the skin," says David Mooney, M.D., trauma program director at Children's Hospital Boston. It's better to use over-the-counter saline solution or plain soap and water.

MYTH | If pus oozes from a cut, it's infected.

► **TRUTH |** Before a scab forms, it's normal for a cut to have some yellowish pus. "This is a sign that the body is trying to make a scab to protect the wound," Dr. Mooney explains. However, once a scab has formed, pus that's thick and green or has a foul odor could be a sign of infection.

MYTH | Wounds should be left open to the air.

► **TRUTH |** Covering cuts and scrapes with a bandage helps keep them clean. It also prevents children from picking at scabs and touching their wounds—habits that can lead to infection, says David Spiro, M.D., chief of pediatric emergency medicine at Oregon Health and Science University, in Portland. He recommends replacing the bandage once a day.

MYTH | If a cut or scrape itches, that means it's healing.

► **TRUTH |** The skin around the cut starts to pull together during healing, so it can be itchy. But itchiness can also be caused by an allergic reaction to the ointment or an infection like yeast or fungus.

MYTH | It's best to remove your child's bandage with one quick pull.

► **TRUTH |** Tearing a bandage off too fast can cause a cut to reopen. Instead, remove it slowly, in the direction of hair growth. If the bandage won't budge, dab rubbing alcohol or water on the edge to loosen the adhesive.

MYTH | Some cuts take a long time to heal.

► **TRUTH |** Most cuts heal within two weeks (five days for ones on the face). Cuts that ooze fluid, don't scab, are swollen, or aren't showing signs of healing need to be checked by a doctor.

+ Boo-Boo Basics

Stock up on these supplies to treat everything from tiny cuts to major scrapes:

