

9. Pain assessment

Unresolved pain negatively affects wound healing and has an impact on quality of life. Pain at wound dressing-related procedures can be managed by a combination of accurate assessment, suitable dressing choices, skilled wound management and individualised analgesic regimens. For therapeutic as well as humanitarian reasons it is vital that clinicians know how to assess, evaluate and manage pain.

Having a basic understanding of pain physiology will help anyone involved in a wound dressing-related procedure to understand the patient's pain experience. It is fundamental to appreciate that pain from wounds is multidimensional, and the patient's psychosocial environment will influence and impact on the physiological experience of pain.

Practical applications

- Assume all wounds are painful
- Over time wounds may become more painful
- Accept that the skin surrounding the wound can become sensitive and painful
- Accept that for some patients the lightest touch or simply air moving across the wound can be intensely painful
- Know when to refer for specialist assessment

Ref – EWMA (2004)