



**University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Abrons Student Health Center**

## **INSTRUCTION SHEET: WOUND INFECTION**

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a wound infection.

Any break in the skin can lead to infection. Germs (bacteria) are normally present in huge numbers on the skin. A break in the skin allows bacteria to penetrate into normally germ-free layers beneath the skin. Sometimes the bacteria are able to multiply; signs and symptoms of infection result.

Signs of infection include: swelling, redness, warmth-to-touch, and pain. Pus may drain from the wound; red streaks, spreading from the wound toward the body, may appear.

The key to treatment of wound infection is antibiotics. Most often, the infection responds nicely to antibiotics. Sometimes, the infection does not respond; the area of infection increases and eventually can spread to other parts of the body.

### **MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR WOUND INFECTION:**

1. Rest the affected area. If the infection is on an arm or leg, elevate the limb above the level of your heart. Rest and elevation help minimize swelling.
2. Take the prescribed antibiotic as directed, until gone.
3. Over-the-counter medications can help relieve discomfort associated with wound infection. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
4. Return to the Student Health Center or make a follow-up appointment with your personal/referral provider as directed. Your provider can make sure the infection is healing properly.
5. If your condition worsens, go to the nearest emergency department, Urgent Care facility or see your personal/referral doctor *promptly*. Specifically, seek care if the infected area is increasing in size, your overall condition worsens, or you get whole-body symptoms. Whole body symptoms include high fever (102 or greater), hard shaking chills, severe headache, or repeated vomiting.