

CHAPTER 5

Basic Family Medical Care

Meeting Personal Health-Care Needs

Make sure that you and your family get the best possible health care.

If you have good health, you have many advantages. You can work hard and support yourself, you can study and learn, and you can enjoy life more fully. All people, even those with handicaps or health problems, need to protect the health they have.

In the Book of Mormon, we read how the members of the Church in the time of Helaman cared for their health needs:

“And there were some who died with fevers . . . but not so much so with fevers, because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots which God had prepared to remove the cause of diseases” (Alma 46:40).

Today we are fortunate to have well-trained doctors and other health workers who can treat difficult health problems. But remember, you have the main responsibility for your good health. The information in this chapter will help you understand when and how to get help from a professional and will also explain some simple things you can do in your own home.

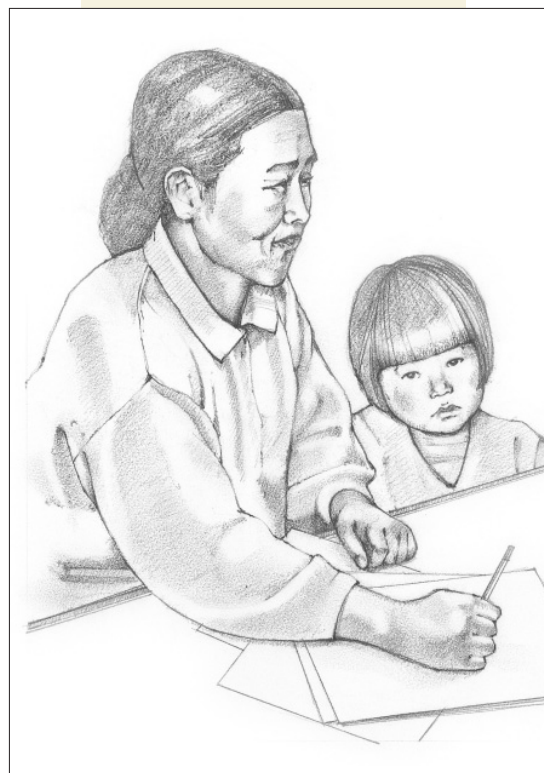
To make good decisions about where to get health care, you need to learn all you can about health care in your area.

If you have a choice such as between two clinics or two dentists, you must decide where to get the best care. You can decide which clinic is cleanest or which has the fastest service. You can decide which dentist will give your family the best care.

You should keep health records at home.

You can resolve some of your health problems at home. Home records are important tools to help you care for your family members at home.

The family health record can remind you that family members need immunizations or parasite treatments at certain times of the year. If you keep a record of medicines prescribed at the clinic, you can remember what drug to buy for a problem that returns. You can know what syrup to buy for coughs or what ointment to buy for skin rashes. You can save money by not making so many trips to the clinic or doctor.



You can treat some emergencies at home if you have a first-aid box.

Minor emergencies happen around the home, many times to children. Burns, cuts, wounds, and childhood diseases are common in all parts of the world. If you can treat these emergencies quickly and correctly, you can prevent serious infections and scars. You can often treat these emergencies at home if you have a first-aid box.

A very simple first-aid box might have the following items in it:

- A roll of good quality toilet paper in its original wrapper (for drying wounds or cuts that have been cleaned)
- A bar or bottle of disinfectant soap (for cleaning cuts and scrapes)
- A liter of purified water (boiled or chlorinated)
- A small bottle of alcohol (for disinfecting around cuts and for sterilizing scissors, needles, and thermometers)
- A small bottle of antiseptic (for use on wounds)
- Pieces of clean cloth that are carefully wrapped so they will stay clean
- A bottle of paracetamol or acetaminophen (Tylenol, for example) for reducing pain and fever
- A thermometer with instructions
- A jar of sterile petroleum jelly (Vaseline, for example)
- A packet of dry ingredients for oral rehydration solution (see page 62)
- Adhesive tape
- Scissors or a knife
- Tweezers

All of these things should be stored in a container with a tight lid. If the container is plastic, you should clean it with a sanitizing solution. You must store the first-aid box carefully so that the supplies will be clean when they are needed. Do not let dust and insects contaminate the things inside the box. Store the box where adults can reach it quickly but where children cannot reach it.

It is a good idea to keep a written list of all the supplies in the box. Then you will know when to get new supplies. Keep the list on the outside of the box so you can see it easily.

Treating Fever, Diarrhea, and Dehydration

Try to lower the temperature of someone who has a fever.

When the temperature of a person's body is too hot, we say the person has a fever. Most fevers are caused by the body trying to fight germs that have infected the person. Some infections, such as colds, may give people mild fevers for a short time. Infections with flu, malaria, and pneumonia often cause high fevers. The fever from some infections, such as tuberculosis, may last for many days.

In areas where malaria is common, a person with a fever should quickly see a health worker and receive treatment if malaria is the likely cause. In areas without malaria, a person with a high fever or one that lasts more than a few days should also seek help from a health

worker. A health worker should be consulted as soon as possible if any of the following symptoms accompany a fever: cough with fast breathing, a stiff neck, excessive sleepiness, extreme restlessness, severe pain, or convulsions.

People with fevers lose extra water, and this can be made worse if diarrhea is also present. It is important for people with fevers to drink extra liquids to prevent dehydration and to help fight both the fever and the infection. Children with fevers should wear loose, light clothing. Bathing or spraying with lukewarm or cool (but *not* cold) water also can help a person with a fever feel better. Taking simple medications such as paracetamol (acetaminophen) can help reduce the fever temporarily.

Give a person liquids to stop diarrhea.

When you eat or drink, your intestine prepares water, salts, and nutrients to be carried by the blood to all parts of the body. When you have diarrhea, your intestine does not work properly. It lets too much water pass through the intestine and out of the body. This can cause a serious condition called dehydration. The intestine also lets food pass through so quickly that the body cannot use it. This results in poor nutrition.

Dehydration and poor nutrition from diarrhea often cause death, especially among small children. In tropical areas, an average of 100 out of every 1,000 babies die before the age of one year. Over 90 of these deaths are caused by dehydration and poor nutrition that begin with diarrhea and fever.

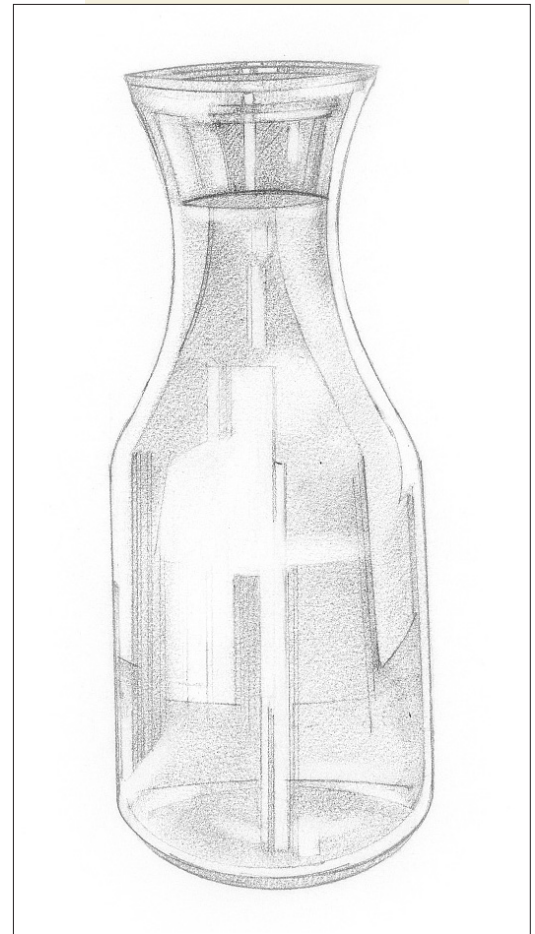
It is important for you to understand how to treat diarrhea and fever. In some places in the world, people treat diarrhea in ways that make it worse. They keep water and liquids away from people who have diarrhea. They think that if a person has no water, the diarrhea will end. But when people have diarrhea, they need a lot of liquid or they may become dehydrated and die.

When members of your family have mild diarrhea, you should give them lots of liquids to drink. As soon as they are able to eat, you should give them soft foods that are easy to digest, such as soup, porridge, cooked bananas, or mashed potatoes. If you are nursing an infant who gets diarrhea, do not stop breast-feeding the child. Breast-feeding helps prevent diarrhea and dehydration.

Use oral rehydration solution to treat dehydration.

If people have very bad diarrhea or have had diarrhea for several days in a row, they can become dehydrated. This is especially true for small children. Symptoms of severe diarrhea and dehydration include:

- Frequent bowel movements that the person cannot control.
- Watery stools.
- Little urine or dark yellow urine.
- More than normal thirst.
- Dry mouth and tongue.
- Fast, weak pulse.
- Sunken or dry eyes.
- Skin that does not spring back immediately when pinched.



If members of your family have diarrhea and have two or more of these symptoms, you should give them oral rehydration solution. You can buy oral rehydration solution in a pharmacy or clinic. It may come in a powdered form that you can mix with purified water, or it may be a liquid.

You can also make a simple oral rehydration solution by mixing the following ingredients:

- 1 liter purified water
- 20 grams sugar (2 tablespoons or 6 teaspoons)
- 3.5 grams ($\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon) salt

Give people with severe diarrhea small sips of the solution every five minutes, even if they vomit, until they begin to urinate normally. The drink can be given with fruit juice as a flavoring. People with diarrhea may also drink green coconut water, thin vegetable soup, or the water in which rice or barley has been cooked.

Treating Wounds and Cuts

The skin protects the body from infection.

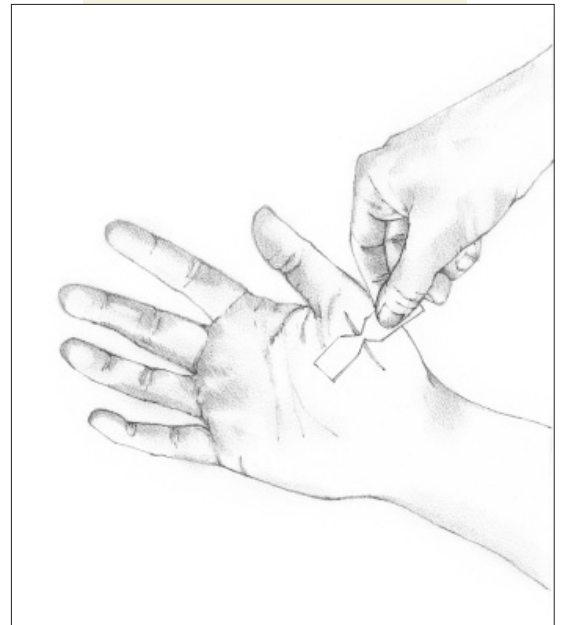
The skin on our bodies protects us in the same way that the skin on a banana protects the fruit inside. If we take good care of our skin, it will help us to stay healthy. The skin works well unless it is broken by insect or animal bites, puncture wounds, cuts, or scrapes. When the skin is broken, it can let in germs and infections that can make us sick or cause damage to our bodies.

Learn the five basic steps for treating wounds and cuts.

Some wounds and cuts are minor, and some are very serious. For major wounds that bleed a lot or are very deep, the person may need to see a doctor. However, you can treat most minor wounds at home without medical help.

You can treat minor wounds and give initial treatment for major wounds by learning the following five basic steps:

1. *Stop the bleeding.* Put any clean cloth (towel, handkerchief, gauze, etc.) over the wound. Press down on the cloth for at least three minutes.
2. *Wash the wound.* This is the most important thing you can do to prevent infection and to help the wound heal quickly. First wash your hands well with soap and water and rinse them in a sanitizing solution or purified water. Then wash the wound with disinfectant soap and purified water.
3. *Clean out dirt particles.* If there are flaps of skin, lift them gently with sterile tweezers. Squirt, spray, or pour purified water on the wound to clean it completely. Do not put alcohol, tincture of iodine, or Merthiolate directly on a wound. These things hurt the flesh and slow the healing process.
4. *Close the skin.* A fresh wound less than 12 hours old will heal faster if the edges of the skin are held together. If the wound or cut is severe, a health worker may need to sew the edges closed to allow for better healing. However, you can close many wounds with a butterfly bandage made of adhesive tape.



Purified Drinking Water

1 liter water + 4 drops
fresh chlorine bleach (4–6%)

Sanitizing Solution

1 liter water + 1 teaspoon
fresh chlorine bleach (4–6%)

5. *Dress and cover the wound.* Antiseptic or antibiotic ointment can be put on the wound when it is clean and closed. Cover the wound gently with a clean covering such as gauze, toilet paper, or a sterilized cloth bandage.

Get medical help to treat wounds that are infected.

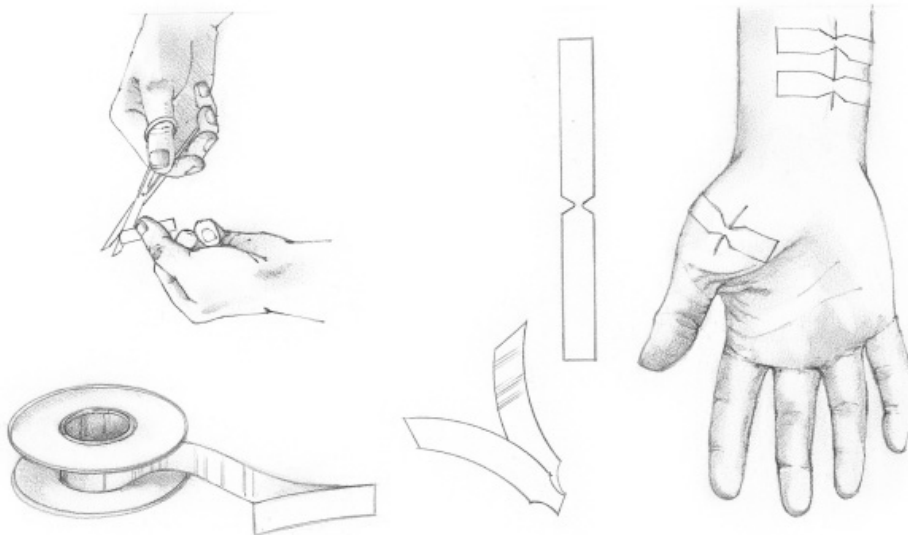
Sometimes wounds can become infected. If they do, they need to be treated by a doctor or a health worker. Any of the following signs may mean that wounds are infected:

- The wound is painful, and the skin is red and hot to the touch.
- There is swelling and pus.
- The wound smells bad.

If anyone in your family has a cut or wound that appears to be infected, you should get help from a doctor or someone who has medical training.

Supplementary Material: How to Make and Use a Butterfly Bandage

1. Unroll some tape and fold it so that the nonsticky sides are touching.
2. Trim the corners from the folded end of the tape as shown.
3. Close the wound and place the bandage on the wound as shown to keep it closed.



General Skin Care

You should be able to recognize different skin problems and diseases.

Skin provides protection from sun, rain, insects, and disease. You must take care of your skin to keep your body healthy and avoid disease.

The following conditions are signs of skin disease:

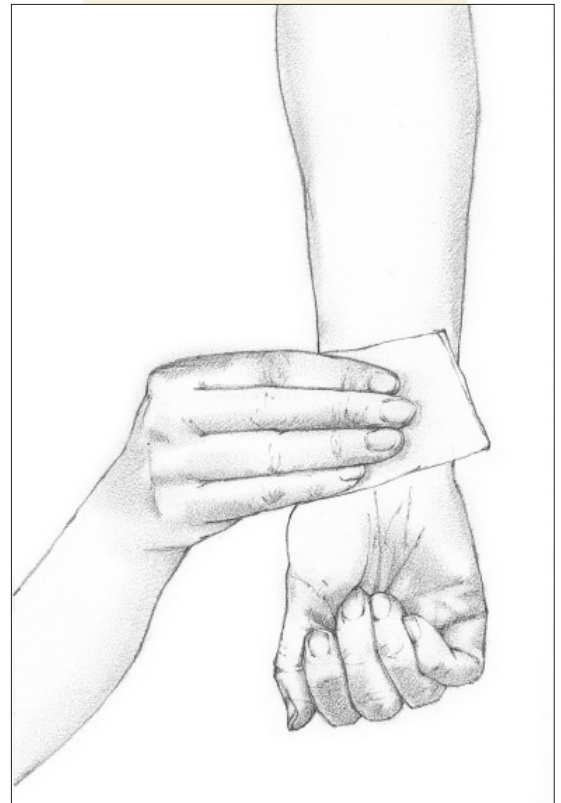
- Swelling or inflammation
- Pain or a burning sensation
- Itching or stinging

- Rashes or dry, scaly patches
- Areas that feel hot to the touch
- Areas that blister, crust, or ooze
- Infected sores with pus
- Sores that heal slowly

Learn the three basic home treatments for mild skin diseases.

There are three simple treatments that you can use in your home to treat mild skin problems:

1. **Hot compresses.** For swelling, inflammation, pain, skin that feels hot to the touch, or pus, apply hot compresses. You can make hot compresses in the following way: Boil water and allow it to cool just enough so that it is still hot but you can hold your hand in it. Fold a clean cloth so it is slightly larger than the area you want to treat. Moisten it in the hot water. Put the cloth over the affected skin. Cover the cloth with a sheet of thin plastic or cellophane. Wrap the cloth and the plastic with a towel. Keep the affected part raised above the body if possible. Put the cloth in hot water again whenever it becomes cool.
2. **Cold compresses.** For itching, stinging, blistering, crusting, or oozing of clear fluid, apply cold compresses. You can make cold compresses in the following way: Soak cloths in cool water and white vinegar (two tablespoons of vinegar in one liter of boiled or chlorinated water). Apply cloths to the affected area several times a day. After several days, when the affected area feels better and has formed new skin, mix talc and water (one part talc to one part purified water). Spread the mixture lightly over the skin. When the new skin begins to thicken or to flake, rub on a little vegetable oil or baby oil.
3. **Protection from sunlight.** When any signs of skin disease appear on parts of the body that are normally exposed to the sun, protect the affected area from sunlight.



See a health worker for serious skin infections.

Serious skin infections should be treated by a health worker. You should see a health worker whenever the following things happen:

- A skin disease gets worse with home treatment rather than healing.
- The lymph nodes behind the ears, under the chin, in the armpits, or in the groin become swollen.
- A red line on or under the skin appears near the infected area and follows the blood vein in the direction of the heart.
- The affected area begins to smell bad.

Treating Burns

You should know how to recognize first-degree, second-degree, and third-degree burns.

Heat and flame can cause very painful wounds. Around the home and workplace, people can be burned by open fires, hot grease, cooking pans, explosions of flammable liquids, hot irons, and over-exposure to the sun. Some burns are merely painful, while others are very dangerous.

First-degree burns are minor burns that do not form blisters. They are red and slightly swollen.

Second-degree burns are more serious. They form blisters that swell and fill with fluid but do not expose raw flesh.

Third-degree burns are often very painful because they destroy the skin and expose raw or burned flesh. But where nerves are destroyed, there may be no pain.

It is important that you be able to tell the difference between these kinds of burns. Then you can give the correct treatment.

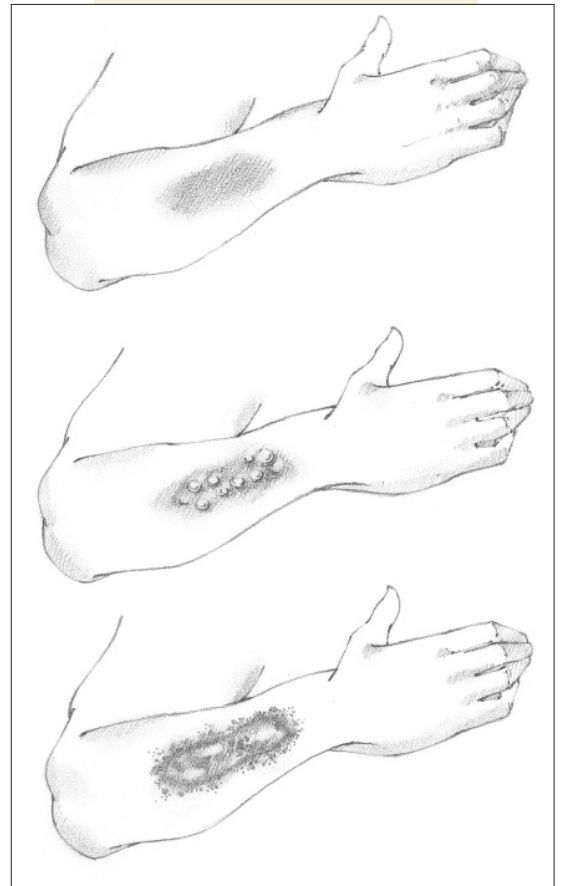
Learn how to treat different kinds of burns.

First-degree burns are minor and can be safely treated at home. To treat them, relieve the pain by soaking the burned part in cold, purified water immediately. The person can take a pain reliever containing paracetamol or acetaminophen (Tylenol, for example) to relieve the pain. No other treatment is necessary. Ointments and creams do not need to be applied.

Second-degree burns are more serious. There will be blisters on the skin. If they are not broken, do not break them. Protect the blisters from breaking and treat as a first-degree burn. If the blisters are broken, keep the burn area clean. Wash your hands in soap and purified water, and then gently wash the burn with soap and purified water. Then cover the burn with a sterile bandage or a piece of sterile gauze.

If the burn is small or if you do not have a way to cover it, leave it open. Wash the open burn area twice daily with soap and purified water. Never put grease, fat, hides of animals, coffee grounds, or feces on a burn. These things are used in some parts of the world, but they do not help burns. They cause germs to spread in the body. If the burn develops pus, a bad smell, or swelling, take the victim to a health clinic or trained health worker.

Third-degree burns that have destroyed the skin should not be treated at home, because the danger of infection is very great. Persons with third-degree burns should be treated by a trained health worker. Also, people who are burned over a large part of their body should be treated by a health professional. Until treatment can be received, loosely wrap the burned area with a very clean cloth or towel.



Learn how to treat a person who is in shock.

It is possible for people to go into shock anytime they experience one of the following conditions: a serious wound or burn, a great deal of pain, a lot of fear, the loss of blood, a severe illness, or an accident. The symptoms of shock include a weak, rapid pulse; pale, damp, or cold skin; confusion, weakness, or unconsciousness.

You should treat people in shock in the following way:

- Have them lie down with their feet higher than their head.
- Cover them with a blanket if they feel cold.
- If they are conscious, let them drink lukewarm liquids, especially oral rehydration solution.