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Know when to seek help for a troublesome wound

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An estimated 6.5 million Americans suffer from chronic wounds — those that have failed to progress through the normal, timely, sequenced phases of healing — according to the National Institutes of Health. The annual cost of treating chronic wounds is estimated to be in excess of \$25 billion and increasing. Moving forward, it's fair to expect a rise in the incidences of chronic wounds as a result of an aging population, and increases in diseases such as diabetes and obesity.

Health notes

Almost 20 years ago, Wound Management Services at Sturdy Memorial Hospital (WMS) started healing patients in July 1995. This center was the first of its kind in southeastern Massachusetts and one of only 150 centers nationwide. Since its inception, WMS has treated over 78,000 patients with an outstanding healing rate of 98.1 percent. In addition, WMS consistently heals patients faster than the national average, in an average of 41 days, in comparison to the average of 66 days, when bench-

marked with over 700 wound care centers nationally.

In our WMS, experienced physicians, wound care specialists, surgeons and registered nurses evaluate and treat patients with chronic, non-healing wounds and ulcers. Wounds don't heal normally in people who have underlying health issues, which directly or indirectly interfere with the complex process of healing. The conditions and factors that put people at greater risk for developing chronic wounds include diabetes, compromised circulation, chronic heart or respiratory disease, immobility, compromised immune systems, lack of

sensation in the extremities and use of certain medications

Wounds should start to show signs of significant healing within the first two weeks. If there are no signs of healing or the wound has not healed completely within six weeks, advanced wound care may be necessary. Neglected or improperly treated wounds can result in infection, or in severe cases, amputation. Trained specialists at WMS develop individualized treatment plans and use technology, advanced therapies and equipment to heal wounds that have not responded to conventional treatment. Treatment usual-

ly includes a combination of interventions such as compression therapy, infection control, angioplasty and stenting or bypass, application of bioengineered skin products and skin grafting.

Living with a chronic wound can cause loss of mobility, depression, financial strain and can negatively impact a patient's quality of life. If you suffer from a chronic wound, help is available.

DR. KENKRE MAHESH is the medical director of Wound Management Services at Sturdy Memorial Hospital. To learn more, call 508-236-7600 or visit sturdyhospital.org.