



AAWC Fact Sheet 1: CHRONIC WOUNDS

The Most Important Health Problem You've Never Heard About

The purpose of the AAWC Fact Sheets is to provide members and the public with information on wound-related topics.

Chronic wounds have a huge impact on many people's lives. Here are some things you probably don't know about them.

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The Association for the Advancement of Wound Care is an interdisciplinary, international professional association with a mission to advance the care of people with and at risk for wounds.

More people are living with a chronic wound than with breast, colon, and lung cancers, and leukemia combined.

1. 4.8 million Americans have a skin wound or ulcer. (Anonymous, 2005)
2. 4.6 million Americans have breast, colon, or lung cancer and leukemia. ("Cancer Prevalence: How Many People Have Cancer?," 2012)
3. The prevalence of leg ulcers in the US ranges between 500,000 and one million. (Bonham, 2003)
4. Over 1% of the population has or has had a venous leg ulcer. (Fowkes, Evans, & Lee, 2001; Patel, Labropoulos, & Pappas, 2006)
 - Women and older adults have higher rates, up to 3.5%. (Lees & Lambert, 1992)
 - Half of venous ulcers do not fully close within six months. (Steed, Hill, Woodske, Payne, & Robson, 2006)
 - At least 60-70% of venous insufficiency ulcers will recur within five years. (Bonham, 2003; Nelzen, Bergqvist, & Lindhagen, 1997)
5. Pressure ulcers (aka: bedsores) have an overall prevalence of 15%. (Amlung, Miller, & Bosley, 2001)
 - At least 95% of these are preventable (Olshansky, 2008)
6. Pressure ulcer prevalence is greater in higher-risk groups
 - People in long term care (nursing homes): 38% (Bergstrom & Braden, 1992)
 - People with spinal cord injuries: 7-39% (Brem & Lyder, 2004; Hammond, Bozzacco, Stiens, Buhner, & Lyman, 1994)
 - People receiving home health services: 10-17% (Ayello & Braden, 2002; Reifsnnyder & Mage, 2005)

People with diabetes are at increased risk for developing a wound.

1. A quarter of people with diabetes will develop a foot ulcer. (Singh, Armstrong, & Lipsky, 2005)
2. More than 15% of diabetic foot ulcers will develop an infection in the bone known as osteomyelitis. (Ramsey et al., 1999)
3. Up to 16% of diabetic ulcers will lead to an amputation. (Lavery, Armstrong, Wunderlich, Tredwell, & Boulton, 2003; Ramsey et al., 1999)
 - Most of those amputations are **preventable**.
4. After an amputation, 13-40% of people will die within a year, and 39-80% within 5 years. (Singh et al., 2005)
 - For comparison, 5-year mortality for all cancers is 34.2%. ("SEER Stat Fact Sheets: All Sites,")

Caring for chronic wounds is expensive.

1. Chronic wounds cost \$12 Billion annually in direct and indirect costs.(2005)
2. A diabetic foot ulcer cost \$28,000 for the first 2 years (1999 data).(Ramsey et al., 1999)
3. A venous leg ulcer may cost \$40,000 per year. (Tran & Meissner, 2002)
4. Average cost of a pressure ulcer is \$43,000. (Armstrong et al., 2008)