

# **Cleaning a wound**

## **Overview**

In this module you will learn how to clean a wound so that it is ready for you to inject local anaesthesia and begin closure.

### **1 Principles**

Infection in a wound may disrupt and delay the healing process, so it is important to thoroughly cleanse a wound before starting to suture. Use sterile water or saline solution. Common antibacterial solutions such as chlorhexidine can be toxic to subcutaneous tissues, so should only be used on the area around the wound and not on the wound itself.

Foreign bodies such as dirt, glass and other debris, haematoma and dead or dying tissue need to be removed by thorough irrigation with the help of forceps and sharp debridement if required.

As well as causing infection, particles of dirt or debris left in a wound can also increase the risk of "tattooing" and an unsightly, painful scar.

### **2 Practise**

You should irrigate with saline under pressure using a 50 ml syringe.

Holding the tip of the syringe as close as possible and perpendicular to the wound, squeeze the syringe as quickly as possible to flush out the debris.

There is a risk of contaminated fluid splashing into your eyes during this procedure, so always make sure you are wearing protective goggles or a mask with a visor if you wear glasses.