Get the Upper Hand on Cuts



What’s at Stake?

Your hands and fingers help you complete almost every task you do throughout your day. Starting with hitting the snooze button in the morning all the way through to setting your alarm at night, you rely on your hands and fingers more than you probably realize. Hand and finger injuries can range from a minor inconvenience to a life-altering event.

What’s the Danger?

Since your hands are involved in almost everything you do, they are vulnerable to injuries like cuts and lacerations. In fact, cuts are one of the most common causes of workplace injuries.

Common cut injuries include:

- Scratches and abrasions.
- Minor cuts requiring first aid.
- Needle sticks. n Puncture wounds.
- Deep lacerations that require stitches.
- Amputations.

You run the risk of infection if you don’t properly clean and care for a cut, abrasion or other wound to your hand or finger. That’s one of the reasons you should always report any injury, no matter how minor, to your supervisor.

Common causes for cuts, abrasions, puncture wounds and amputations include:

- Lack of training or improper training.
- Lack of experience.
- Rushing, taking shortcuts, or not paying attention to your task.
- Not following safety rules, not wearing the correct personal protective equipment, or not wearing any personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Using the wrong tool for the task.
- Removing machine guards or using machines with missing guards.
- Handling sharp objects with your hands instead of using tools or equipment. For example, picking up broken glass with your hands instead of using a broom and dust pan to clean up.

- Working in an area that doesn’t have adequate lighting or has reduced visibility.
- Working on or around machines that have not been properly locked and tagged out.

How to Protect Yourself

Here are 10 ways to protect against cuts and lacerations—one for each finger.

1. Attend training.
2. Ask questions if you aren’t sure how to perform a task safely.
3. Never bypass machine or equipment guards.
4. Never use machines or equipment with missing guards.
5. Never bypass the lockout/tagout on a machine or piece of equipment.
6. Keep your hands out of danger areas, such as the point of operation of a machine and all moving parts.
7. Keep tools and equipment well maintained.
8. Don’t use damaged or broken tools.
9. Use the right tool for the task and use it safely.
10. Always wear appropriate gloves and other required protective equipment.

FINAL WORD

Even though cuts and lacerations are one of the leading causes of workplace injuries, you can get the upper hand by following safe work practices and always wearing protective equipment!