

Enabler #3: Wound Irrigation

1) Purpose of Wound Irrigation

- Mechanical debridement of slough, surface bacteria, wound exudate and dressing residue
- Preparation of the wound bed for swabbing when there is a deep and surrounding infection

2) How to Irrigate

- Use eye protection and other appropriate personal protective equipment because of the potential of splash back of body fluids.
- Irrigation pressure should not cause trauma to the wound bed. Pressures of 8-12 pounds per square inch (psi) are recommended.¹ Irrigation with higher pressures risks trauma to the wound bed and impairs healing.
- Use the **30-20-10 method** to produce pressures of **8-12 psi**
 - Depending on the setting and site recommendation use a:
 - **30-mL** luer lock syringe with an 18-gauge IV catheter cathlon **or**
 - **30-mL** luer lock syringe with an 18-gauge blunt fill needle **or**
 - **30-mL** luer lock syringe with Wound Irrigation Tip
 - Fill with **20 mL** of fluid: Sterile Normal Saline and Sterile water are the solutions of choice for cleansing wounds and should be at least room temperature.²
 - Hold syringe **10 cm** from the wound bed
 - Use volumes of **100-150 mL**

3) Contraindications to Wound Irrigation

Do NOT irrigate areas where the base of the wound is not clearly visible, as it is unclear where the fluid is going and may not be retrievable.³ This can include areas such as:

- Cavities
- Sinuses
- Tunnels

Consult your Local Wound Care Champion, Advanced Wound Care Clinician or prescriber if unsure.

References:

1. Joanna Briggs Institute (2008). Solutions, techniques and pressure in wound cleansing. *Nursing standard (Royal College of Nursing (Great Britain): 1987)*, 22(27), 35–39.
2. British Columbia Provincial Nursing Skin & Wound Committee (2018) Procedure: Wound cleansing, 1-9. Retrieved from: <https://www.clwk.ca/buddydrive/file/procedure-wound-cleansing>.
3. Sibbald, R. G., Goodman, L., Woo, K., Krasner, D., Smart, H., Tariq, G. et al. (2011). Special considerations in wound bed preparation 2011: *An update. Advances in Skin and Wound Care*, 24(9), 415-436.