



# CUTS AND SKIN LESIONS

## Fact sheet No:8

### Why do I have to cover any cuts with a blue plaster or dressing?

A pathogen called **Staphylococcus aureus** lives on human skin. Any cuts or scrapes on the skin encourage it to grow very well. In boils or other infected areas it can grow exponentially. Pus contains millions of *Staphylococcus aureus*. This bacterium is usually harmless on the skin but if it gets onto food, especially ready to eat food, it can make a toxin that causes severe vomiting. The toxin is heat stable and will survive cooking. Covering any cuts, sores, boils or scrapes on the skin with a waterproof cover stops the pathogen from getting onto the food.

### Does the dressing have to be blue?

- No, it can be any colour as long as it is waterproof and sticks well to the skin. Blue is a popular colour in the food industry because it is visible. If the dressing falls off your skin it is easy to notice it.
- If the blue dressing DOES fall off into food, the food should be thrown away because it is infected and will contaminate the food.
- Covering cuts with a waterproof dressing will also protect the food handler by keeping the cut as clean as possible. This is especially important when handling raw meat as there will be contaminants on the meat which can make the infection in the cut worse.

