



## Calcium alginate

By Nancy Morgan, MBA, BSN, RN, WOC, WCC, CWCMS, DWC

Each month *Apple Bites* brings you a tool you can apply in your daily practice.

### Description

- Dressing with calcium and sodium fibers made from seaweed
- Spun into rope or flat dressing form

### Actions

- Transforms into a moist gel consistency when it comes into contact with exudate or moisture
- Absorbs up to 20 times its weight
- Conforms to the shape of the wound
- Fills in dead space: As it absorbs moisture and exudate, the gel fibers swell, making the dressing larger than when applied
- Moist gel consistency will maintain moist healing environment and facilitate autolytic debridement

### Indications

- Full- or partial-thickness wound with moderate to heavy exudate, including infected wounds or wounds with tunneling and/or undermining
- Bleeding wound (helps achieve hemostasis)

### Contraindications

- Third-degree burns
- Minimal exudate or dry wound

### Frequency

- Change every 1 to 3 days depending on amount of exudate.

Click for print-ready file



- Some brands can be left in place up to 5 days.
- Change when exudate “strike-through” in the top layer or surrounding tissues occurs.
- If dressing needs to be changed more than twice daily, reassess appropriateness.



Alginate dressing.

### Tips

- Cover with secondary dressing.
- Don't moisten this product before using.
- Do not use this product in combination with a hydrogel.
- If silver-impregnated alginate is used, the dressing must be removed before magnetic resonance imaging procedures.
- Dressing can dehydrate wound bed. If the wound bed dries, the dressing will not form a gel and may adhere to granulation tissue, causing trauma to healing tissue. If alginate dressing appears dry or sticks to the wound, saturate it with sterile saline or wound cleanser to facilitate dressing removal. If dressing is repeatedly dry upon removal, reassess if continued use of alginate dressing is appropriate.
- Don't use too much of the product because overpacking may delay wound healing.

View: Calcium alginate dressing



## Examples/coding

- Algicell Calcium Alginate Dressing, DermaGinate Dressing, Kaltostat, Kendall Calcium-Zinc Alginate, Medihoney Alginate Dressing, Restore Calcium Alginate Dressing, Silverlon Calcium Alginate Dressing, and Sorbsan
- Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) Code A6196-A6199: Covered Dressing Change, 1 per day

## How to apply rope alginate dressing

- Using a sterile cotton-tip applicator or gloved finger, gently fill the wound with rope by fluffing and layering the dressing back and forth into the wound.
- Pack the wound very lightly. Be sure that the dressing comes in contact with all wound surfaces, including areas

of undermining or tunneling.

- Cut any excess rope because overpacking will damage the wound bed.
- Apply a secondary cover wound dressing. The cover dressing should extend at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) beyond the wound edge. (Note the date, time, and your initials on the outside of the dressing before application.)




Access **patient education instructions** for alginate dressings. ■

Nancy Morgan, cofounder of Wound Care Education Institute, combines her expertise as a Certified Wound Care Nurse with an extensive background in wound care education and program development as a nurse entrepreneur. Read her blog "**Wound Care Swagger.**"

Information in Apple Bites is courtesy of the **Wound Care Education Institute (WCEI)**, copyright 2012.

# Be a Winner!

Every issue of *Wound Care Advisor* will feature this icon  scattered throughout the issue.



As you read through the journal, count the number of icons we've hidden.

There is a link on the CONTENTS page of each issue where you can enter a drawing for a \$50 gift card.

For more information, visit the journal's website [www.WoundCareAdvisor.com/logos](http://www.WoundCareAdvisor.com/logos)

# Congratulations

We have a winner from our May/June issue:

## Christa Goeb

*\$50 gift card generously provided by the National Alliance of Wound Care*

Don't forget to enter for July/August!

[www.WoundCareAdvisor.com/logos](http://www.WoundCareAdvisor.com/logos)