



Surgery Wound Care

Please review the following guidelines to help your surgical wound heal quickly, successfully and with less scarring:

Cleaning

- Leave the initial bandage in place and keep the area completely dry for 24 hours (If you DO NOT take blood thinners) and 48 hours (if you do take a daily blood thinner).
- After 24/48 hours:
 - Gently take off the pressure bandage and cleanse the area with an anti-bacterial soap and water. Do not spray water directly into the wound. Rather, gently run water over the wound to rinse off soap. Pat the area dry.
 - Apply a film of ointment (Vaseline or Aquaphor healing ointment) to the site with a Q-tip or directly to the bandage. If using Vaseline, buy new Vaseline if the supply is more than 3 months old.
 - Cover the area with a band-aid. If the area is too large to be covered with a band-aid, use Telfa and paper tape to bandage the wound. Your pharmacy will have these supplies.
 - Repeat every 24 hours until you return for suture removal.
- Please do NOT immerse the surgical site under water (bath, hot tub, swimming pool, etc.) until one week after sutures are removed.

Activity

- Avoid vigorous physical activity while the stitches are in place-this includes heavy lifting, running and other sporting activities. Avoid activities that pull or stretch on the area with stitches.
- If the wound is on the lower leg, keep the affected leg elevated to the level of the hip as much as possible and avoid unnecessary walking. This is to avoid excessive swelling and slow wound healing.
- Do not shave the area until the stitches are removed. This could unintentionally remove the sutures.

Bleeding/Pain

- Occasionally wounds bleed. Almost always, this bleeding can be stopped by applying pressure to the area for 10 minutes. NO PEEKING! After you have been applying pressure for 10 minutes, using a clock to keep time, slowly let up the pressure to see if the wound is still bleeding.
- If bleeding continues, try holding pressure for an additional 10 minutes. If the bleeding continues, please call the office during normal business hours or call the physician directly if it is after hours.

Infection

- Even though all efforts are taken to eliminate infections, occasionally wounds do become infected. A little redness around the wound is normal, however if the skin around the wound becomes increasingly more red, swollen, hot and painful, you may have an infection.
- If signs of infection occur, please call the office to be seen.

Pain

- Mild discomfort and swelling can be encountered during the healing process. This usually occurs 6-24 hours after surgery. Take Tylenol if needed.
- If continued discomfort or increased swelling occurs, please call the office or go the Emergency Room. Patients can ice area for 5-10 minutes an hour if needed for pain.

Suture Removal

- You will be given an appointment for suture removal. This is usually a painless process, but some mild discomfort can be experienced. Sutures are usually removed in 7-14 days after the procedure.

Scar

- Continue using your ointment (Vaseline or Aquaphor) for one more week after the sutures are removed.
- Any type of skin surgery will leave a scar. As a rule of thumb, the line of stitches tends to be longer than the length of the original wound. This is done to avoid unnatural puckering and dimpling of the skin that would result if the incision were not lengthened.
- Both redness and bumpiness of scar are expected, especially in the first two months. These generally improve as healing progresses, but redness can be expected for as long as 6-8 months. In general, a post surgical scar improves with time and can take up to one year or more to fully mature.
- After your sutures have been removed and you finish the additional week of ointment, you may start using a scar treatment such as Mederma.
- Everyone heals differently and the final scar appearance depends greatly upon an individual's ability to heal. your provider is available to you throughout the healing process to discuss any concerns that arise.

Skin Grafts

- The wound care instructions above explain the care of your donor site.
- Graft site: DO NOT change your bandage. No shower or soaking in a bath until instructed by your physician (typically after your postoperative visit- 7 days).

Site Specific Instructions

- Ear: After washing with soap and water as instructed, soak a paper towel in a mixture of equal parts white vinegar and tap water and apply to the wound for 10 minutes. Blot dry and apply ointment and dressing as instructed. This is done to reduce the chance of infection with a bacteria that can reside in the ear.
- Nose Surgery: Try to avoid forceful nose-blowing. use Q-tips if necessary.
- Extremity Surgery: Elevate the area as much as possible above your waist when you are resting.
- Forehead, Cheek, or Eyelid Surgery: Be aware that significant eyelid swelling, bruising or a 'black eye' can result and is expected in these areas. Cold compress/ice packs for 5-10 minutes, several times a day, will help.