

Post-Operative Suture-Wound Care Instructions

The importance of post-operative care to your surgical site cannot be stressed enough. The care you take for yourself and your surgical wound is critical to the procedure's success and recovery.

- Leave your pressure bandage on (if applicable) for 48-72 hours. Compressive dressings help prevent hematoma formation and eliminate dead space within a wound. Afterward, a simple bandage with ointment applied over the wound opening is okay.
- It is OK to shower with your pressure bandage, but it will need to be kept dry (you can tape plastic wrap over the bandage).
- If the pressure bandage is removed, you should contact our office to schedule a bandage change or begin following the wound care instructions below. Some of our patients will have steri-strips (tan-colored strips of tape) over the wound. Do not remove these with your bandage; let them fall off on their own.

If the pressure bandage is removed, please perform the wound care daily:

- Wash your hands with soap and water. It is now OK to get the stitches wet in the shower, but you must avoid swimming, hot tubs, or baths while sutures are in place.
- Do not clean the site with hydrogen peroxide; instead, gentle soap and water may be used.
- Dry the wound thoroughly with a clean, soft cloth by blotting.
- Apply a thick layer of over-the-counter petroleum jelly/Vaseline® or Aquaphor® with a cotton swab (apply directly over the steri-strips if applicable). Use triple-antibiotic ointment instead if oral antibiotics are not prescribed.
- Cover the wound with a clean bandage; it is OK to use regular Band-Aids.
- If the surrounding area gets irritated from the bandage adhesive, try using a different type of bandage, such as paper tape. You may apply over-the-counter cortisone cream to the irritated areas of skin where the bandage was; **DO NOT APPLY THE CORTISONE CREAM ON THE WOUND.**

Signs of Infection are increased pain, swelling, redness, or yellowish drainage several days after surgery. If any of these signs appear, please call your doctor. Some bruising and swelling are normal.

Special Instructions:

- Limit activities for at least 48-72 hours. It is advised that you do not participate in strenuous activities while healing for 2-3 weeks following the surgery as these activities will increase your risk for Infection, worsen scar appearance, and delay healing time even further (strenuous activities do include exercising or lifting).
- During the first few days following surgery, sometimes a small amount of blood can ooze from the surgical site and be noticed underneath the bandage. Please schedule a bandage change during regular office hours if the blood is contained within the waterproof layer and not actively leaking or draining.

- If profuse bleeding occurs: Apply constant, firm pressure for approximately 25 minutes. If bleeding continues, call your doctor.
- Take extra strength Tylenol if pain is present but avoid aspirin or ibuprofen products due to increased bleeding risk.
- Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic prophylaxis. A clean wound has a 2% chance of infection; a clean-contaminated wound has a 10% chance of infection. It is estimated that prophylaxis for clean procedures would reduce the overall incidence of wound infection by 17 percent.
- Make an appointment to get your sutures removed. When the stitches are left in for too long, it can result in marks and scars. Based on the location of the stitches, below are the guidelines for when they should be removed. Removal times may vary at your doctor's discretion.
 - Arms and backs of hands: 7 days
 - Chest, stomach, or back: 7-10 days
 - Face: 4-5 days
 - Fingers or toes: 10-14 days
 - Legs or tops of feet: 10 days
 - Neck: 7 days
 - Over a joint: 12-14 days
 - Palms or soles: 12-14 days
 - Scalp: 7-10 days
- When the sutures are removed, cover the area with petroleum jelly or Aquaphor® 3 to 5 times a day until it's healed. Bandage the area temporarily and only as needed to prevent abrasions during work or play activities. Keep the area moist with ointment so that scabbing does not occur. If a scab forms, do not pick at it. Simply keep it moist with petroleum-based ointments until it dissolves.

What To Expect:

There will be a scar, depigmentation, and redness in the location after surgery. This will decrease as part of the healing progress, but redness can be expected for as long as six months to a year. Everyone heals differently, and the final scar appearance depends on the individual's ability to heal. In other words, some scars heal and can hardly be seen, while others become thick and tender. Because of the unpredictable nature of wound healing, the final appearance cannot be preoperatively ascertained; therefore, no guarantees can be implied or stated regarding the scar's final appearance.