

Open Wound Care Instructions – Day of Surgery

How to care for your wound:

- Keep the bandage in place for 24 hours (*unless otherwise instructed*). If the bandage becomes blood-tinged or loose, reinforce it with gauze and paper tape.
- Apply gentle pressure over the bandage for 10 minutes every hour for the next few hours. (*Refer to page 2 for management of bleeding*).
- Remove the bandage in 24 hours and begin wound care as follows (*remember to wash your hands with soap and water before handling your wound*):
 1. Clean the open wound with plain tap or soapy water.
Note: If the wound is on your leg, shower with the bandage on. After cleaning your body, take the bandage off and then wash the wound separately.
 2. Dry the wound with a Q tip or gauze pad.
 3. You may see gauze-like material within the wound. This material is called gel-foam and is used to help stop the bleeding. Do **NOT** peel it off. It will come off on its own.
 4. Apply a layer of ointment (**Aquaphor Ointment** (preferred), Vaseline Petroleum Jelly, or Bacitracin Ointment) to the open wound. A Q-tip can be used to apply this ointment. Do **NOT** use Neosporin Ointment.
 5. Cover the site with a sterile non-stick pad and paper tape. A Band-Aid can also be used to cover the wound. If you use a Band-Aid, please make sure it is large enough to cover the entire wound. Do **NOT** use regular gauze.
 6. Repeat these steps **twice a day** until the wound is healed (some open wounds, particularly those on the legs can take up to 3 to 4 months to heal).

*It is an old wives tale that a wound heals better when it is exposed to air and allowed to dry out. The wound will heal faster with a better cosmetic result if it is kept moist with ointment and covered with a bandage. **Do not let the wound dry out.***

- If you require medication to control pain, you may take Extra Strength Tylenol. Icing for 10 - 15 minutes every 2 hours can also help with pain. If Tylenol (and ice) does not provide relief after 2 - 3 hours, you can take Extra Strength Advil. However, Advil is a blood thinner so it is preferable to start with Tylenol first and only add Advil if necessary. If adding Advil to Tylenol provided relief, continue to take both medications together. Refer to the instructions on their containers for frequency and daily limit.
- It is normal to have swelling and bruising around the surgical site. The swelling and bruising usually peaks at 48 hours after surgery and then subsides in approximately 10 - 14 days. Elevate the area to reduce swelling if possible. Icing for 10 - 15 minutes every 2 hours can also help with swelling. (*Note: For surgery performed around the eyes such as the **cheek, nose, and forehead**, you may develop bruised and/or swollen eyelids*).

Please go to page 2 for information on restrictions, addressing possible complications, and the wound healing process.

Restrictions

- No strenuous activity for **48 hours** following surgery (*unless otherwise instructed*). Strenuous activities include those that elevate your heart rate or blood pressure (ie. running, biking, weight lifting, etc).
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages for 48 hours. Alcohol is a blood-thinner.
- Do not smoke for 3 weeks. Smoking is detrimental to wound healing.
- Do not submerge a healing wound into ocean or pool water to avoid an infection.
- There are no dietary restrictions.

Addressing Possible Complications

Bleeding:

1. Leave the bandage in place.
2. Use tightly rolled up gauze or a cloth to apply direct pressure over the bandage for 20 minutes.
3. Reapply pressure for an additional 20 minutes if necessary.
4. Call the office or go to the nearest emergency room if pressure fails to stop the bleeding.
5. Use additional gauze and tape to maintain pressure once the bleeding has stopped.

Pain:

1. Post-operative pain should slowly get better, never worse.
2. A severe increase in pain may indicate a problem. Call the office if this occurs.

THE WOUND HEALING PROCESS

1. One week after surgery a pink / red halo will form around the outside of the wound. This is new skin.
2. The center of the wound will appear yellowish white and produce some drainage.
3. The pink halo will slowly migrate in toward the center of the wound until the wound is covered with new shiny pink skin.
4. There will be no more drainage when the wound is completely healed (**For wounds on the legs, the healing process may take up to 3 to 4 months. Wearing compression socks can expedite the healing process.**)
5. It will take six months to one year for the redness to fade.
6. The scar may be itchy, tight and sensitive to extreme temperatures for a year after the surgery.
7. Massaging the area several times a day for several minutes after the wound is completely healed will help the scar soften and normalize faster. Begin massage only after healing is complete.