

Care of Wounds With Stitches

Wound Care

1. Keep the wound covered and dry with the dressing applied for 48 hours after surgery. You may shower after 48 hours, but **do not rub** the wound site, instead blot dry. Try to keep stitches (sutures) dry.
2. Remove the dressing **two** days after surgery. Using cotton-tipped applicators (Q-tips) that have been dipped in *hydrogen peroxide*, **gently** cleanse the incision line of all crust **daily**. Do not rub vigorously.
3. After cleansing, apply a thin coat of antibiotic ointment (Polysporin, Bacitracin or Vaseline) **over** the stitches and **over** the small steri-strip bandages. Steri-strips are not always used, but when used should **not** be removed by the patient unless they come off on their own.
4. Cover the stitches and steri-strips with a **clean** bandage **each day** until the stitches are removed.
5. Stitches are removed in 5-14 days, depending upon the location of the incision and the type of suture used. They should be removed by an experienced person. We will tell you when to return to have the stitches removed.

Wound Closure

Certain surgical wounds may heal best if left open to heal on their own. Other wounds do best if closed with sutures. The length of the closed surgical wound (suture line) is usually at least **2-3 times** the diameter of the wound.

Things That May Occur Following Surgery

1. **SWELLING AND BRUISING.** Swelling and bruising are common following skin surgery, especially on the face. It is normal to expect some swelling, especially 24-48 hours after surgery. If your wound is close to the eyelids, swelling can be severe. You can help minimize this by limiting bending, lifting and strenuous physical activity for **several** days following surgery. Sleeping with your head and shoulders elevated on extra pillows can be helpful if surgery is performed on the face. Icing the wound for 5 minutes three times daily is also helpful. Keep your bandage dry.
2. **BLEEDING.** It is normal to expect some oozing at the incision site. Clean drops of blood or crust with *hydrogen peroxide*. If you notice **rapid** swelling 20 to 40 minutes after a sudden movement or when bumped, and/or blood dripping from the incision, **call us immediately**. This may mean active bleeding underneath the incision (hematoma) and requires prompt attention. Although very rare with skin surgery, this generally occurs only in the first two days after surgery.
3. **INFECTION.** Wound infections after skin surgery are also unusual. Good wound cleansing further reduces this risk. Signs of infection are: increased pain, swelling, redness or yellowish drainage several days after surgery. Although rare, if this occurs, **please contact us promptly** for evaluation.
4. **PAIN.** Pain after skin surgery is variable but usually minor. In certain areas such as the face, and especially the nose, it may be more notable. **Extra Strength Tylenol** is usually sufficient. Avoid aspirin or Advil following surgery.
5. **SCARRING.** Surgical wounds heal by forming a scar. There will be a scar and redness in the scar after surgery. This will decrease as healing progresses and redness should be expected as long as six months. You can help in lessening scar formation by minimizing activities that place additional stretch and tension on your healing surgical wound.

Pathology Results. Specimen results are usually received within seven (7) days. If you have not heard from our office by that time, please contact us. Your specimen is being sent to an outside laboratory. You will receive a separate billing from their office for their services.

Please feel free to call us with questions: Ada Dermatology, (208) 377-0820