



CARE FOLLOWING YOUR SKIN SURGERY - Sutured Wound Care for the first week

ACTIVITY:

No strenuous activity for 48 hours (this includes gardening or heavy lifting of any kind). Resume moderate activity in 48 hours. Walking slowly/strolling is an excellent light activity during the first week. Running and weightlifting are not.

If your surgery was on your head or neck, elevate your head with pillows when you lie down for the first few nights (consider sleeping in a recliner if you have one), do not bend over to pick up objects or tie shoes for a few days if you can avoid it.

Do not drink alcoholic beverages for 48 hours.

DISCOMFORT:

Do not use aspirin or products containing aspirin for 3 days after your surgery, unless approved by your doctor.

To relieve discomfort, you may take acetaminophen (for example, Tylenol or Extra-strength Tylenol) as directed. It usually works very well for this kind of pain. And, if you combine this with ibuprofen (Advil) the two together are often very helpful in relieving pain (as helpful as Vicodin in one study). If your doctor has given you a prescription for Vicodin, Tylenol with codeine, Dilaudid, or Percocet, or a different medicine, use as directed.

After the first night (when the numbing medicine wears off and it hurts the most), pain should slowly get better, not worse. A severe increase in pain may indicate a problem. Call the office directly if this occurs.

Numbness, itching and sensitivity to temperature changes can occur after surgery and may take up to 18 months to normalize.

BLEEDING, BRUISING AND SWELLING:

It is normal for your wound to ooze a small amount of blood and stain the dressing.

Expect bruising and swelling in the area of your surgery to be the most noticeable 48 hours to 72 hours after surgery. Bruising and swelling usually begin to lessen 4-5 days after surgery. It should start to fade in 10-14 days.

You may minimize swelling by sleeping with your head elevated with several pillows.

If the swelling worsens rapidly or becomes increasingly tender, contact your doctor.

If your wound bleeds enough that the blood heavily soaks through to the outside of your bandage, do the following:

Leave the bandage in place.

Use tightly rolled up gauze or a cloth to apply direct pressure over the bandage for 20 minutes (no peeking).

If there is substantial bleeding that does not resolve with pressure, please call the office or proceed to the nearest emergency room or call 911 for assistance.

Use additional gauze and tape to maintain pressure once the bleeding has stopped.

INFECTION:

It is normal for your wound to be slightly sore and pink.

If the area becomes increasingly tender, red, warm or if you develop a fever and chills, then contact your physician.

DIETARY/SMOKING RESTRICTIONS:

If your surgery involved your lips and mouth, avoid hot liquids and foods for the first two to three hours after your surgery. Eat soft foods for the first 24 hours and be careful when brushing your teeth (use a child's toothbrush to avoid stretching your mouth). Take small bites and try to minimize opening your mouth widely for 3 weeks.

Do not smoke for 3 weeks; smoking can be very harmful to wound healing.

DAILY WOUND CARE:

Always wash your hands with soap and water before touching the bandage.

Keep the white bulky pressure bandage in place for at least 48 hours after surgery. If the bandage becomes blood tinged or loose, reinforce it with gauze and tape. (See above for management of bleeding).

GENTLY remove the bulky white pressure bandage in 48 hours, being careful not to disturb the underlying stitches.

Wash daily with warm clean water and soap (out of a dispenser, avoid bar soap), pat dry and apply a thin coat of petroleum/vaseline. Cover with a non-stick bandage and repeat daily until surface stitches have dissolved (usually 7-10 days).

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR PHYSICIAN:

Your wound continues to bleed briskly through the bandage after you have reinforced it and applied firm pressure for 20 minutes.

Acetaminophen and ibuprofen have not relieved your discomfort.

Your wound becomes increasingly sore, tender, red, or warm.

Your surgery site rapidly swells.

LONG-TERM WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Once the bandages are removed, the scar will be red and firm (especially in the lip/chin area). This is normal and will fade in time. It might take 6-12 months.

Massaging the area will help the scar soften and fade quicker. If the scar feels lumpy or firm, begin to massage the area 6 weeks after you remove the steri strips (7 weeks after surgery). To massage apply pressure directly and firmly over the scar with the fingertips and move lengthwise along the scar. Massage the area for a few minutes, 10 times a day for 2 weeks.

About 6-8 weeks after surgery it is not uncommon to see 'pimple-like' bumps along the scar. This is normal as the scar continues to mature and the stitches underneath the skin begin to dissolve. Do not pick or squeeze--this will resolve on its own. Should one break open producing a small amount of drainage, apply vaseline/petroleum ointment a few times a day until it is completely healed.

Numbness in the surgical area is expected. It might take 12-18 months for it to return to normal. You may experience itchiness, tingling and occasional sharp pains until then. These feelings are normal and will subside once the nerves have completely healed.

For cosmetic coverage, a green-tinted concealer can be used to counteract redness during the initial first few months, once surface stitches have dissolved (usually by 7-10 days). Try Clinique Redness Solutions or Eucerin Redness Relief. Keep it protected from the sun for the first few months to improve the color of the scar.

During business hours call our office at 802- 864-0192 if you have any questions or concerns.

After hours: please call 802- 847-4570 or 1-800 -358-1144 and ask to have your surgeon paged.