

# Scar Revision / Suture Care Post-Operative Instructions

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## What supplies do I need to buy before surgery?

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Vaseline®                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrogen peroxide (3% solution)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-adherent (non-stick) gauze pads | <input type="checkbox"/> Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bandage tape                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice packs (you can make some at home) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton swabs (Q-tips®)              |  |

## How should I prepare for surgery?

- Stop smoking cigarettes at least 6 weeks before surgery.
- Stop chewing tobacco at least 4 weeks before surgery.
- Don't drink any alcohol 24 hours before surgery.

## What are my instructions after surgery?

### General rules

- If you get IV anesthesia (medication that makes you numb and sleepy), have someone drive you home after surgery and help you at home for 1 day.
- Get lots of rest.
- If you are exercising less after surgery, this may lead to **constipation** (not being able to have a bowel movement, or having hard, dry poop). To help with this, you may want to eat more raw fruit and drink more fluids.
- Even if you're not taking pain medication, don't drink alcohol for 3 weeks after surgery as it causes fluid to build-up in your body.
- Do not smoke. Smoking slows down healing and increases your risk of complications after surgery.

## Medications

- You may only need to take Tylenol® (acetaminophen) for your pain for the first day or two after surgery. Please follow the directions on your bottle. Do not drink alcohol while taking Tylenol® (acetaminophen).
- If your doctor prescribes a **narcotic or opioid pain medication** (strong medications to help with severe pain), take as prescribed with food to avoid getting an upset stomach.
  - Also, make sure that you do not take it the same time as Tylenol® (acetaminophen), because most narcotics also have acetaminophen in them. It is important that you do not take more than 3 grams (3,000mg) of acetaminophen in 24 hours. Patients with liver disease should not take more than 2 grams (2,000mg) of acetaminophen in 24 hours.
  - Do not drink alcohol, use machinery, or drive a car while taking narcotic or opioid pain medications.
- Do not take aspirin, or any products that have aspirin in them, unless your doctor says it's okay.
- If you are taking vitamins, start taking them again as long as they don't cause uncomfortable symptoms.

## What should my activity level be?

- Start walking as soon as possible after surgery. This helps reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots, pneumonia, and constipation.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking any prescribed pain medications (narcotics/opioids).
- In general, it is okay to go back to work in 2-7 days. Please follow any instructions that your doctor has given you.
- Avoid these activities for **1 week** after surgery:
  - Lifting heavy objects (objects that weigh more than 10 pounds)

- Bending at the waist
- Avoid activities that raise your blood pressure and cause your body to overheat, like sports, for **14 days**.
- Avoid swimming and going into hot tubs and saunas for **3 weeks**.

### **What should I do when I get home from surgery?**

- For the first 2 nights after surgery, keep your head up higher than the rest of your body while you sleep. You can sleep with 2-3 pillows or sleep in a recliner chair.
- Use ice packs around your **incision** (the place where the doctor cut during your surgery) during the first 48 hours after surgery to decrease swelling. Please refer to the “How Do I Make an Ice Pack?” handout (available online: [www.med.umich.edu/1libr/OTO/IcePacks.pdf](http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/OTO/IcePacks.pdf)).
- Take off your bandage 24 hours after surgery, unless the doctor gives you different instructions.
  - If your doctor gave you Detachol® (a tape remover), put it on the bandage tape. Let it soak for 2-3 minutes, and then peel the tape off like a Band-Aid®.
- You may shower 24 hours after surgery.
  - It’s okay if your incisions get wet in the shower, but don’t let the shower water run constantly or directly on the incisions.
  - When you shower, only use warm water.
- Clean the incisions with half hydrogen peroxide and half water 3 times a day for 3 days. Then switch to cleaning the incisions with soap and water 3 times a day.
  - Remember to wash your hands well before you do any wound care.
  - After each cleaning, put Vaseline® on the incisions to help soften any crusts that form for 6 days.

- When you're at home, don't cover your incisions with bandages. When you go out, cover your incisions with non-adherent (non-stick) gauze and bandage tape.

### **What follow-up care will I receive?**

- If you have sutures that do not dissolve, the doctor or medical staff will remove them in 5-10 days.
  - Dissolvable sutures can take from 10 days to 3 weeks to completely dissolve.
- Your doctor will let you know if you need to schedule any follow-up visits.

### **What other changes will I need to make?**

- Don't shave the skin where you had surgery for 3 weeks after your surgery.
- Do not use any essential oils on the area of your surgery for 3 weeks after your surgery.
- 3 weeks after your surgery, you may use makeup and sunblock as long as the incision is totally closed, healed, and pink.
- Keep your scars out of the sun for at least 12 months. Always use a strong sunblock (SPF 50 or more) if you can't avoid the sun.
- Follow scar-reducing treatment instructions 3 weeks after your surgery, if your doctor says it's okay.

### **When should I call my doctor?**

#### **Call your doctor if you notice any of the symptoms below:**

- Increased swelling or bruising
- Swelling and redness that gets worse and lasts for a few days
- Increased redness by the incisions
- Severe or increased pain that is not helped by medication

- Any side effects to medications including rash, nausea, headache, vomiting, or diarrhea
- An oral (mouth) temperature over 101°F
- Yellowish or greenish liquid coming from the incision
- A bad smell coming from the incision
- Bleeding from the incisions that you can't control with light pressure
- Loss of feeling or motion

**If you have dangerous or life-threatening bleeding, you should call 911 or go to the Emergency Department.**

### **Who should I call if I have questions?**

On Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm:

- If you are a patient of Dr. Brenner, Dr. Joseph, or Dr. Moyer, call (734) 432-7634, press option 1 and ask for the facial plastic team nurse.
- If you are a patient of Dr. Stucken, call (734) 998-6082 and ask for the team 5 nurse.
- If you are a patient of Dr. Kim or Dr. Rudy, call (734) 615-8838 and ask for the team 4 nurse.

After hours or on weekends:

- Call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the ENT doctor on call.

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Authors: Lily Wu, RN, Shannon Rudy, MD  
 Edited by: Karelyn Munro, BA, Brittany Batell, MPH MSW

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