

Wound Care for Sutured Wounds (after skin surgery)

What are my general instructions for after surgery?

A pressure bandage has been applied to help prevent bleeding. This dressing should remain in place for 24 hours. If the dressing comes loose prior to this, re-tape it.

How do I care for sutured wounds?

After 24 hours, remove the original dressing. After the bandage is taken off, the wound can get wet in the shower. Clean the wound as follows once a day for one week or until we see you to remove the stitches.

1. Wash your hands
2. Clean the wound gently with soap and water then pat dry.
3. Apply a thin layer of Vaseline ointment for 1-2 weeks.

At home, the wound may be left without a bandage. If you wish to cover it, use a band aid and change it each time you clean the wound.

How can I manage my pain after surgery?

Any pain is related to swelling and should be minimal. For the first 1-2 days:

1. Apply an ice pack over the dressing for 15-20 minutes every 1-2 hours until bedtime on the day of surgery.
2. Take Tylenol® extra strength (acetaminophen 500mg), 1-2 tablets every 6-8 hours as needed, but not to exceed 6 pills in a 24 hour period,(unless allergic).
3. For areas on the head and neck, sleep with your head elevated on 2 pillows.

Should I decrease my activity level?

Activity increases your risk of bleeding and pain by increasing blood flow to the area.

1. Decrease activity for the next 1-2 weeks or as directed.
2. Avoid all exercise, bending, lifting, aerobic walking, recreational sports, etc. Any activity that increases your heart rate increases your risk of problems.

Should I be concerned if the wound is bleeding?

You may notice a small amount of blood on the dressing for the first few days and this is normal. However, if bleeding persists, is excessive, or soaks through the bandage:

1. Relax and recline.
2. Apply firm, steady pressure to the wound for 15 minutes straight, **without lifting**.

If bleeding continues, call our office or one of the physicians listed below. In the rare event that you cannot reach anyone on the list, you may go to the nearest emergency room.

What will the wound look like?

There may be swelling or bruising around the wound, especially near the eyes. If the wound becomes increasingly red or inflamed, warm, tender, drains a creamy fluid, or if you develop fever or chills, please call our office.

What can I expect with dissolvable stitches?

If dissolvable stitches were used on top, it is normal for the area around the stitches to be pink. The sutures will start to fray after 2-3 weeks. After 3 weeks you can use tweezers and scissors to remove them or rub a dry wash cloth over top of the area and they should fall off.

You may experience itching, tingling or numbness near the wound as it heals.

Will I have a scar?

The scar may remain pink for months and the area may remain numb for weeks to months following surgery.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 09/2014