

Patient Handout - Wound Care

What can I expect after my procedure?

To do the procedure, some local freezing was put into the area. This will start to wear off about 4-6 hours after it was given. At that time, you may experience some discomfort in the area. Your pain should be well controlled by taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) as you would normally for pain.

In the next few days after your procedure you may notice minor bleeding, bruising, and swelling of the area. The bruising may be larger than you expect, especially if any undermining was done during your procedure. If the procedure is done on the face, you may have some bruising under your eyes. You may also feel some tenderness, itching, numbness or tingling around the area. This is all normal and no cause for concern.

How do I take care of my incision?

In the first 3 days after your procedure:

1. Your skin takes 2-3 days to redevelop its waterproof barrier. Therefore, avoid submerging the area or having any direct shower water come in contact with the area for 3 days.
2. Once the waterproof barrier is set, you can shower as usual. Wash the area gently and only with water until the stitches are removed.
3. Do NOT rub or scrub area.
4. Do NOT apply any lotions to the area.
5. Do NOT submerge the area (swimming, bath, hot tub) for at least 1 week. We recommend waiting 2 weeks for swimming or any activity where the area will be underwater for more than a few seconds.

From day 3 until the stitches are removed:

1. Keep the area open to air as much as possible.
2. If you know you may be exposing the area to any contaminants (ex: going to the beach, gardening, etc...) it is best to keep the area covered.
3. If steri-strips have been used, allow them to fall off on their own.
4. If you notice the area becoming dry or itchy, you can apply a small amount of Vaseline to moisturize the area. There is no need to apply polysporin or other antibacterial unless there is concern for infection. If you are concerned about infection, please call the office.
5. Do NOT rub or scrub area.
6. Do NOT apply any lotions to the area.

7. Do NOT submerge the area (swimming, bath, hot tub) for at least 1 week. We recommend waiting 2 weeks for swimming or any activity where the area will be underwater for more than a few seconds.

After the stitches are removed:

1. Continue to keep the area open to the air as much as possible, covering it only as needed to keep it clean.
2. Wash the area as usual unless you are told otherwise by your medical team.
3. As before, we recommend waiting the full 2 weeks before submerging the for more than a few seconds in bath or while swimming.
4. To improve the appearance of the scar, you can gently massage the area twice daily with any fragrance/scent-free lotion or cream.

When and where do I get my stitches out?

Your doctor will tell you when to come back to get the stitches out. The decisions about when to take them out is a balance between taking them out early enough to avoid the “rail road track” appearance of the stitch marks around the wound, and leaving them in long enough so that the incision has healed and is strong enough to withstand regular use without the wound opening. Here are some general guidelines:

- Face or other cosmetically sensitive area: 5-7 days.
- Body, area of low/moderate tension: 7-10 days.
- Body, area of moderate/high tension: 7-14 days.
- Dissolvable stiches do not need to be removed, your body will absorb them.

We recommend the following in your case:

- 5-7 days
- 7-10 days
- 10-14 days
- Stitches are dissolvable and do not need to be removed. If you notice stitches remaining after 4 weeks, please call the office for a follow up. Sometimes the area heals before the stitches fully dissolve, and we can remove them if you find them irritating.

What should I watch for or when should I come back to the clinic?

In general, if you have any concerns, please see a health care professional. If you notice any of the following, please call our office or the office of your primary care doctor to be seen as soon as possible:

1. Redness that is spreading.
2. Swelling that is getting worse.
3. An increase in pain after 2 days or more.
4. Fever over 38 degrees Celsius.
5. More discharge or a change in the smell of the wound.