

Post-operative Wound Care

Thank you for choosing to have skin surgery with us. How you look after the wound now is very important in order to prevent problems and minimise scarring. Please read through this advice carefully.

Bleeding:

Avoid strenuous activity, straining, heavy lifting and hot environments after surgery, as this may make the wound bleed, this is particularly important in the first 48 hours after surgery. If the wound bleeds please apply firm pressure with clean tissues or gauze for 10-20mins and elevate the area if possible. If the bleeding stops, change the dressing. If the bleeding is profuse or does not stop, please contact us for advice (see below for contact details).

Below the knee surgery:

Surgery in this area requires special attention and elevation as is at higher risk for infection.

For the first 3 days elevate your leg above the buttock as much as possible. Only get up to go to the toilet or make yourself food/drink.

For the next 2 weeks elevate your leg when you are resting/sitting. Don't go doing any long walks or leg exercises at the gym.

Stitches:

If you have only dissolving stitches under the skin, we usually use "steri-strips" to line up the skin edges. The "steri-strips" should be left in place for 3-7 days before gently peeling them off. Take care not to accidentally peel them off when changing dressings before then.

Most stitches however are tied above the skin surface and do not dissolve. These are left in place for 5-14 days, depending on the site and type of surgery performed. We will advise when you should return to have them removed; please ask if you are not sure. Once the stitches have been removed, regular application of paper tape (e.g. micropore tape) along the length of the wound for up to three months is useful to minimise scarring.

Infection:

Redness around the wound edges in the first few days is a normal part of the healing process. However, if the wound is becoming increasingly painful each day, if the surrounding skin is becoming red and tender, if the wound is discharging pus, or if you feel hot and cold like you have a fever, then the wound is likely infected. The use of betadine on a wound that is 'suspect' is useful however please get in touch with us for advice if you think the wound is getting infected.

How to contact:

The best way of making contact with us regarding wound problems after surgery is to take a photo and email it through to the doctor who provided the treatment (their email address is above). Please tell them how you are feeling and what you have noticed. Expect a reply within 24hours, even after hours, and they will let you know what is required.

If you need to speak to us more urgently (e.g. for a bleeding wound) please call us on 438 2188 and if it is after hours, follow the prompts to be put through to Dr Christian.

Results:

Results take about 1-2 weeks to come back. We will send you a copy and explanation via email. The doctor may phone you to discuss further treatment, if required.

Dressings

Keep the wound completely dry for the first 48-72 hours. This means avoid showering or washing to that area. In the shower you may find moving the shower head to a lower position or covering the wound with cling film helpful in order to keep the wound dry. *Please no swimming/spa until the stitches are out and the wound is healed.*

Putting ointments or other potions on a wound is rarely indicated. Fingers are the main source of infection so it is important to avoid touching a wound. Only put ointment on the wound if directed by your doctor or nurse. Scabs or slough on a wound can slow healing, so gentle removal is advised. This can be done by using clean tissues or a clean gauze that has been soaked in warm salty water (saline solution).

If you have a bandage over the dressing, this can be removed the same night as the surgery if uncomfortable, or preferably after 24-48 hours. If your fingers or toes swell or go tingly/numb then the bandage is too tight, please loosen or remove the bandage straight away.

*** Your first dressing change should be on:**

However, if it is soaked with blood, change the dressing sooner. Do not leave a wet soggy dressing on the wound.

*** Following this change your dressings:**

A dressing is only required while your wound is oozing (to catch blood). Once it stops oozing you can leave the dressing off to allow it to dry and heal faster.

If the stitches are rubbing on your clothes you can cover it with a light dressing and change it daily. Allow it to air dry when possible.

If you are worried about disturbing the wound during your sleep, you can cover the wound with a light dressing and take it off during the day.

Whatever you do, don't leave the same dressing on for the 1-2 weeks.

Removal of sutures in