

Post-Operative Wound Care (v5/10)

The importance of wound care to your surgical site cannot be over stressed. The care you take of yourself and your surgical wound is extremely important to the success of the procedure and to your recovery and well being. There are several things that could happen following surgery.

1. **Bleeding:** Bleeding can occur following surgery. To reduce the possibility of bleeding, the following instructions are given:
 - a. Limit activities for 24 hours.
 - b. Keep the operative site elevated for at least several days after surgery, (as best you can.)
 - c. If surgery was on the face, head or neck:
 - i. avoid stooping or bending for several days.
 - ii. avoid straining to have a bowel movement.
 - iii. sleep with your head and shoulders elevated on extra pillows.

Should bleeding occur, apply constant, firm pressure on the bandage for 20 minutes! This will usually stop any minor bleeding. (Change dressing as needed after bleeding stops.) **Call if bleeding doesn't stop.**

2. **Swelling:** Swelling is normal and the way your body reacts to an injury or surgical wound. Surgery around or above an eye can even cause a swollen, black-and-blue eye. To reduce the amount of swelling that may occur: Apply an ice bag for 5-15 minutes each hour during the waking hours of the first day. If you do not have an ice bag, a baggy filled with crushed ice and wrapped with a thin towel will do nicely.
3. **Pain:** Pain, post-operatively, is generally minimal. In nearly all cases, Extra Strength Tylenol (taken per package insert instructions) will relieve any pain you may experience.
4. **Infection:** Infection seldom occurs when the wound care instructions have been carefully followed.

Wound Care - Two Times Each Day beginning after 24 hours unless specified otherwise

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Apply hydrogen peroxide and water (half and half) (or sterile saline) to the suture (stitch) line with a gauze pad or Q-tip(s) to gently remove any crusts from the wound. Dry the wound thoroughly with a clean soft cloth by blotting. Avoid hydrogen peroxide near eye/s. [For skin grafts, keep dry for 3-5 days, then change dressing (unless dressing is sutured/stapled); cleanse with sterile saline And apply copious topical antibiotic (recommended types noted below) then dressing. (Skin graft sutures are usually removed in one week.)]
3. Apply a thin layer of **Polysporin** or **Bacitracin** (or Bactroban or Altanax or alternative) antibiotic ointment with a Q-tip(s). (Avoid Neosporin containing or Triple antibiotic ointment, which tends to cause allergic reactions.)
4. Cover with a clean dry non-stick gauze (e.g. **Telfa**) and paper or cloth tape dressing (or Band-Aid).

Signs of infection are: Increased pain, swelling, redness, or yellowish drainage several days after surgery. (However, these are also the signs of normal healing; expect such symptoms and signs to increase or be present for the first several days after surgery and then, gradually decrease over weeks. Healing may take several weeks or more. Healing wounds may also start to itch; avoid scratching.)

Expect some discoloration (usually, redness) and a **scar** after surgery, which will decrease or fade over time as healing progresses. Final scar appearance may take up to or > 6 months, is variable and a function of wound characteristics and individual healing response. As a result, some wounds heal imperceptibly; while others become spread, thick, red, itchy and/or tender and may require ancillary treatment. Because of this unpredictability in wound healing, final post-procedure scar appearance cannot be reliably pre-operatively determined. Therefore, no guarantees can be implied or stated as to the final appearance of the scar. Of additional note, for best possible healing, avoid smoking until healed and avoid/minimize sun exposure by using an SPF 30 or > sunscreen to your wound until all redness has resolved. A topical scar fading agent (e.g. Prosil, available at our office) may be used twice daily for 3-6 months starting 3-5 days after suture removal and/or complete healing has occurred. Broad Band Light (BBL) may be helpful for persistently red scars after 6 weeks. An additional charge applies. Any wound healing concerns, such as abnormal healing (e.g. not healed within 6 weeks) or recurrence warrant re-evaluation. Abnormal pathology findings will be telephoned to you within 2 weeks (in most situations); otherwise you may call us. We do not call you if your findings do not require treatment/management change or additional treatment. ("No news is good news.") Any additional treatment/s that may be needed (even if it is for the same lesion) is/are not uncommon and will be charged, as is customary.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Follow your instructions for wound care.
2. Keep your wound dry for the first 24-48 hours (except for any dressing changes before then).
3. After 24-48 hours, you may get your wound wet; (except for swimming/bathing - avoid swimming for 1 week if stitches or staples were placed, if possible.) Also, however, keep your dressing dry. Whenever the wound gets wet, the dressing should be changed as instructed.
4. If you have stitches/staples on the trunk or extremities, avoid strenuous activities or activities that involve rigorous body movements (such as aerobics, weight lifting, golf, tennis, bowling, etc.) for 2 weeks, as such activities may cause your stitches to break open. Be careful! Avoid make-up until healed (i.e. sutures are removed.)
5. Notify our office immediately should you have bleeding that will not stop or signs of infection occur.