

Post-surgical Wound Care

Taking care of your wound

Your dressing should remain in place until the day after the procedure. If the dressing comes loose before then, replace it carefully. If Steri-strip tapes were used, leave those in place until your follow-up appointment.

If you do not have Steri-strips, cleanse the wound or suture line twice daily with soap and water. Use a Q-tip to remove any dried blood or crust. Pat dry gently. Apply a thin layer of Bacitracin or Polysporin ointment over the wound and cover with a new Telfa pad (non-stick dressing) or bandage. Avoid using ointments containing neomycin (Neosporin) because they may cause redness or itching in some people. The first day the wound may be tender and bleed slightly or seep a small amount of clear fluid.

Two days after surgery, you may shower and allow the wound to get wet, but do not let the forceful stream of the shower hit the wound directly. Always remove a wet bandage promptly and replace with a dry bandage applied over a layer of antibiotic ointment.

Avoid direct sunlight on the wound as this will cause it to stay red for a longer period of time. Three weeks after surgery, you may start massaging your scar with lotion or sunscreen.

What to expect

For the first day or two, do not move the affected area excessively to avoid bleeding. A small amount of blood on the dressing is normal. If bleeding seems persistent, apply pressure firmly and steadily over the dressing for 10 to 15 minutes. This will usually stop the bleeding but if it does not, call our office promptly.

In addition, there may be swelling and bruising around the wound, especially if your face or the area around your eyes was treated. To minimize this, the day after surgery you may apply an ice pack over the dressing every 2 hours for 10 to 15 minutes. Elevation of the surgical area is also critical. The wound may feel numb for up to several weeks, but this almost always resolves with time.

After surgery, the suture line and wound edges will appear pink to red in color but the area will lighten every day. Once the sutures are removed, the incision line and suture marks will continue to fade over weeks to months. In rare instances, a wound may heal with a thickened scar. This usually occurs in patients with a prior history of poor healing but is also dependent upon the location of your incision. If you develop a fever or chills or the wound becomes increasingly inflamed, warm, or contains pus, please call our office.

Managing pain

Post-operative pain is usually minimal. Take 2 tablets of Extra-Strength Tylenol every 4 hours as needed. Dr. Zannis can prescribe a stronger pain medication should you require it. Do not take products containing aspirin or ibuprofen because these may increase bleeding. An ice pack can lessen pain as well.

Post-operative pain usually resolves within the first week following surgery but you may experience discomfort in and around the wound as it heals over the next several weeks.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our office at (252) 633-1197.

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