

WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS

For the most part, how fast and how well you heal following surgery is in your hands. If you adhere to your surgeon's orders, attend all follow-up appointments, and follow these simple guidelines below, you shouldn't have any issues.

GENERAL WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS

1. KEEP YOUR INCISION DRY

Water can introduce bacteria to the incision site, increasing the risk of complications. Avoid pools, hot tubs, beach or soaking the incision in water for prolonged period of time. Bacteria can be introduced through the water which causes infection.

2. KEEP YOUR INCISION CLEAN

Always wash your hands before touching the incision to avoid introducing germs and bacteria. Clean the wound as directed by your healthcare provider, usually with mild soap and water. Avoid using ointments (i.e bacitracin) or antiseptics that can irritate the wound.

3. KEEP YOUR INCISION COVERED unless covered with Dermabond or surgical glue

Some drainage from incisions is expected. Keeping your incision covered helps keep it clean and dry and prevents drainage from staining your clothes. If the incision is no longer draining, then is ok to keep it open. Avoid sweat or a dirty environment.

4. REGULARLY CHANGE BANDAGE

If a dressing is in place. Changing your bandage helps prevent infection and promotes a better environment for your wound to heal. Change your bandage on a daily basis.

HOW TO CHANGE A BANDAGE

Changing a bandage properly isn't hard, but it is important that you do it properly. Here are the steps you should follow:

The following video may be helpful <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nzc1YSnSRpE>

GATHER YOUR SUPPLIES

Before you begin, make sure you have everything you need:

- Sterile gauze pads
- Medical gloves
- Surgical tape
- A plastic bag
- Scissors
- Qtip or Instruments
- Prepare the Materials

Open the gauze pad packages and pre-cut strips of surgical tape to make the process smoother. It is best to put all your supplies over a towel or pad to facilitate cleaning afterwards
SANITIZE YOUR HANDS

You need to have a sterile environment. Thoroughly wash and dry your hands and put on a pair of medical gloves.

REMOVE THE OLD BANDAGE

Carefully loosen the tape around the existing bandage. Gently remove the old bandage without touching the wound.

CLEAN THE INCISION

If instructed by your doctor, clean the incision using these steps and instructions:

- Gently wash the area with soap and water to remove any crust. Avoid scrubbing or soaking the wound.
- Do not use rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or iodine, as they can damage tissue and delay healing.
- Let the incision air-dry or gently pat it dry with a clean towel before applying the new bandage.

APPLY A NEW BANDAGE

Place gauze or dressing over the incision. Secure the gauze with strips of surgical tape.

WATCH FOR INFECTION

Changing your bandage frequently also gives you the opportunity to inspect your incision to ensure there are no signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or unusual discharge. Clear, Yellow or blood tinge discharge from the wound is expected. However, any other color may indicate infection and should be inspected by Dr. Hernandez. It is easiest to send me a picture for inspection through the portal

Early detection of an infection can prevent more serious complications.

SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Supporting your immune system can significantly aid in your recovery. This is especially important if you have a medical condition like diabetes, which can slow healing.

Ensure you sleep well, eat a balanced diet rich in vitamins and minerals, and try to keep stress levels low. Regular gentle exercise, if approved by your doctor, can also help boost your immune system.

DO NOT SMOKE

Smoking or using tobacco products is well known to slow healing and increase the risk of complications. Avoid smoking and stop 6-8 weeks prior to surgery.

AVOID SUN EXPOSURE

New skin is more sensitive to sunlight. Your scar will be more prone to sunburn and could result in further scarring if you aren't careful. You should limit your time in the sun and avoid exposing your wound to direct sunlight for several months following surgery.

DO NOT WEAR TIGHT CLOTHING

Tight clothing around your incision can irritate the wound and restrict airflow, which is necessary for healing. Opt for loose, breathable fabrics that allow the area to stay dry and comfortable.

NEVER PICK OR SCRATCH YOUR WOUND

Your wound may become itchy as it heals, but it's important not to pick or scratch it. Doing so can reopen the wound, introduce bacteria, and increase the risk of infection. If the itching is severe, talk to your doctor about safe ways to get some relief.

REST

Rest is essential for recovery. Your body needs extra energy to heal, so make sure to get enough sleep each night and take naps if needed. Avoid strenuous activities and listen to your body's signals that you are overdoing it.

EAT A NUTRITIOUS DIET

Eating a nutritious diet ensures your body has the essential nutrients it needs to heal. Include plenty of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains in your diet. Foods rich in vitamins A and C, zinc, and protein are particularly beneficial for wound healing.

HYDRATE

Remember to stay hydrated. Drinking plenty of water helps maintain skin elasticity, which can aid in wound healing. Try to drink at least eight glasses of water a day, and more if you are active or if it's hot outside.

DON'T MISS FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS

The follow-up appointments your surgical team schedules are very important. These visits allow your doctor to monitor your healing progress and address any issues that might arise.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR WOUND BLEEDS

Some bleeding at the incision site is normal. If you notice bleeding, apply direct pressure to the area using a clean cloth or sterile gauze. Hold the pressure for a 15 minutes to help stop the bleeding. Once the bleeding slows or stops, you can replace the bloody dressing with a new one

If the bleeding does not stop after applying pressure or if it is heavy, contact your doctor immediately for further instructions.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR WOUND LOOKS INFECTED

If you believe that your wound is infected, contact your doctor immediately. Early treatment is crucial to prevent the infection from getting worse and leading to further complications.

Signs of infection include increased redness, swelling, warmth around the incision, unusual discharge (like pus or white fluid), or a foul odor. You might also experience increased pain or a fever.

If you notice any of these symptoms, keep the wound clean and dry, and never apply any ointments or medications.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR STITCHES OR SUTURES COME UNDONE

Do not panic or try to fix your stitches or sutures yourself. Cover the area with a clean, sterile gauze pad and contact your surgeon. This can happen sometimes. Once the sutures become undone, your surgeon will likely leave it open as to reduce risk for infection.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WOUND PACKING

Most wounds that require packing are done for concerns of previous infection. These wounds require special attention and more detail care.

Follow the above instructions, additionally

- Gather your resources and clean your hands
- Set up your field around the wound to include all your materials and instruments needed. This will prevent multiple trips to look for materials
- Remove the outer covering of the wound, including any tape previously placed
- Wet the material in the wound prior to removal. This will minimize pain as the gauze becomes adherent to the surrounding tissue when it becomes dry. This is part of the wound care as the gauze removes the bacteria as it dries up inside the wound.
- Remove the packing. You may need to get it wet multiple times as it is removed from the wound. Having a 10cc syringe with sterile water is helpful
- At this point it is helpful to jump in the shower and let soap and water run through the incision. Do not scrub it. Using a showerhead inside the wound can also be helpful but not necessary.
- Dab the area dry
- Introduce any packing into the wound that was previously used. You may need a long Qtip for this portion. Ensure to pack it deep into the wound. Continue to pack circumferentially around the base of the wound take make sure all areas are covered. Pack it until you can not pack any more
- Cover the wound with gauze and tape, or external dressing of your choice
- Repeat the process on a daily basis until the wound is healed
- The following video may be helpful <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAlYiAfokX4>

WHEN TO CALL YOUR SURGEON

If you are ever in doubt about something or have a question, please never hesitate to give us a call. However, if you experience any of the following, you should call your surgeon or other healthcare provider ASAP:

- Persistent or worsening pain (especially if you aren't getting relief from prescribed pain medication.)
- Signs of infection, such as increased redness, swelling, warmth, unusual discharge, or a foul odor.
- Heavy bleeding that doesn't stop with direct pressure.
- Stitches or sutures that come undone or if the wound reopens.
- Fever above 101.4°F (38°C).