

Post-Operative Instructions - Stitched Wounds

Leave the bandage on until the day after surgery. Wash the wound twice daily with hydrogen peroxide on a gauze pad or cotton ball. Pat dry if needed. Apply a dab of Polysporin ointment onto a sterile band aid or gauze pad, and use this to cover the wound. Do not touch your finger to the wound, even when applying the ointment. Betadine "clear" and Bacitracin-zinc are alternatives, also available over the counter (without a prescription). At times, a prescription ointment will be recommended instead. There is no problem taking a shower. Keep the wound covered when bathing and clean it afterwards as directed above. If your wound is on a hairy area the bandage can be skipped, but apply the ointment more generously.

Discomfort, swelling and bruising occurs between 6-20 hours after surgery. If painful, take Tylenol. If the pain is severe or persistent, contact the office as soon as possible. The wound should feel a little better every day. If it starts to hurt more, that is a sign of a problem. Bruising, especially on the face, can sometimes be dramatic, but is harmless. Removing any stitches is nearly painless and is usually done 6-14 days after surgery, depending on the location and type of surgery that was performed. Dissolving stitches can fall out in 3 to 21 days. Under the skin dissolving stitches melt away slowly. Sometimes a piece can slip through the skin surface before it dissolves and will need to be removed.

If the skin around the wound becomes red, swollen and painful, you may have an infection. Call and inform the doctor about this. It is normal for the wound to drain small amounts of clear or red fluid. If the wound drains white-yellow fluid or pus call us immediately. Failure to call about an infected wound can have serious consequences.

If the wound starts to bleed, hold gauze or cotton over the area and apply firm continuous pressure for 15 minutes, without stopping or checking to see if it stopped yet. If the wound continues to bleed, contact the office. Avoid swimming in public waters while the wound is open or draining at all, but your own pool is okay.