



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Caring for Your Wound after Your Skin Excision or Biopsy With Sutures

This information explains how to care for your wound after your skin excision or biopsy with sutures.

You had an excision (removal) or biopsy to remove or test a suspicious area of skin or tissue. Caring for your wound after your skin excision or biopsy is important to help prevent infection and promote healing.

■ Caring for Your Wound at Home

- Leave the bandage on your wound for _____ hours after your procedure and keep it clean and dry.
- Apply an ice pack to your wound for 10 to 15 minutes several times during the first 24 to 48 hours after your procedure to help reduce bleeding, pain, and swelling.
- If you have Steri-Strips™ (tape strips) over your wound, do not remove them. They will fall off on their own by slowly curling off in about 1 week. Trim the curled edges and within a few days, the entire strip should come off.
 - If your doctor or nurse told you to leave them on until your follow-up appointment, do not remove them.
- You can shower _____ hours after your procedure. Do not allow the shower stream to directly wet your wound. Do not take a bath, go swimming or go into a hot tub until your wound is healed or sutures are removed. Do not use your towel to dry your wound. Pat it with a fresh gauze pad instead.

Cleaning your wound

Follow the instructions below to clean your wound daily.

Supplies:

- Cotton swabs (Q-tips®)
- Nonstick gauze pads
- _____ solution
- _____ ointment
- Paper tape or a bandage (Band-Aid®) cut to fit the wound size

1. Gather your supplies
2. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for 15 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
3. Clean your wound with _____.
4. Gently pat the wound dry with a gauze pad.
5. Use cotton swabs to put _____ ointment on your wound.

- Cover your wound with a bandage cut to the size of your wound. If you use nonstick gauze, keep it in place with paper tape.
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for 15 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Follow these instructions for a total of _____ days/weeks.

■ Managing Pain

You may have pain or discomfort after your procedure. To relieve your pain or discomfort, take acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) or Extra Strength Acetaminophen (Extra Strength Tylenol[®]). Follow the dose directions on the package. If this is not enough for pain relief, call your doctor's office.

■ Bleeding and Bruising

- You may have swelling and bruising. This usually goes away over several days.
- If you have any bleeding, press firmly on your wound with a clean gauze pad for 15 minutes. If the bleeding doesn't stop, repeat this step. If the bleeding still hasn't stopped after repeating this step, call your doctor's office.

■ Activities

- Do not do strenuous exercise or heavy lifting for _____ weeks.
- Ask your doctor or nurse when you can lift objects heavier than 5 pounds (2.3 kilograms). You may be able to do this right away after your excision or you may need to wait until it is safe for you.
- If your skin excision was on your neck, face, or scalp, do not bend at the waist until your sutures are removed. Your doctor may tell you to wait _____ weeks.
- Your doctors and nurses will give you instructions on what exercises and movements you can do while your wound is healing. Check with your doctor or nurses before starting any gym activity such as running, jogging, or lifting weights.

■ Sleeping

- If your skin excision was above your neck, sleep with the head of your bed raised 45 degrees for the first 10 days after your procedure. You can do this by sleeping with 2 pillows under your head.
- If your skin excision was on one of your arms or legs, sleep with that body part raised above the level of your heart. You can do this by resting your arm or leg on pillows.
- Ask your nurse if you need to avoid lying on your wound or putting any pressure on it for the first 48 hours to reduce irritation and bleeding.

■ Healing Process

You may have discoloration (pinkness or redness) at the site of your wound for up to 1 year after your procedure; some people may have it for even longer. Once your wound has healed, apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 to the area to protect it from scarring.

■ Suture Removal

- For nondissolvable sutures:** You will need to return to your doctor's office to have your sutures

removed. Schedule your suture removal appointment in _____ days/weeks.

- **For dissolvable sutures:** Continue to check the sutures until they are dissolved, which may take up to 1 to 2 months. It may look like a piece of small string at your wound. If the sutures are not bothering you, allow them to dissolve completely. If the sutures start to bother you, call your doctor's office.

■ **Call Your Doctor or Nurse if You Have:**

- A temperature of 100.4° F (38 ° C) or higher
- Chills
- Any of the following symptoms at your wound or the area around it:
 - Increasing redness or swelling
 - Increasing pain or discomfort
 - Skin that is hard or hot to the touch
 - Yellowish or greenish drainage
 - Bleeding that doesn't stop after applying pressure
 - Foul odor
 - If the lesion appears to have opened
 - Rash
 - Blistering

If you have any questions or concerns, talk with a member of your healthcare team. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at _____. After 5:00 pm, during the weekend, and on holidays, please call _____. If there's no number listed, or you're not sure, call (212) 639-2000.