



## **CARE FOLLOWING YOUR SKIN SURGERY- Open Superficial Wound Care**

### **ACTIVITY:**

- Avoid strenuous activity for 48 hours. Slowly walking/strolling is an excellent light activity during recovery. Running and weightlifting are not.
- If your surgery was on your head or neck, elevate your head with pillows when you lie down, and do not bend over to pick up objects or tie your shoes for 48 hours.

### **BATHING:**

- Keep the area of your surgery dry for the first 24 hours.

After 24 hours, you may shower. Gently remove the bandage and replace it after the shower. If you bathe in a tub, the bath should be brief.

### **DISCOMFORT:**

To relieve discomfort, you may take acetaminophen (for example, Tylenol or Extra- strength Tylenol) as directed. It works very well for this kind of pain. And, if you combine this with ibuprofen (Advil) the two together are often very helpful in relieving pain (as helpful as Vicodin in one study). If your doctor has given you a prescription for Vicodin, Tylenol with Codeine, Dilaudid, Percocet, or a different medicine, use as directed.

The scar may be itchy, tight, and sensitive to extreme temperatures for a year.

### **BLEEDING, BRUISING, AND SWELLING:**

It is normal for your wound to ooze a small amount of blood and stain the dressing.

Expect bruising and swelling in the area of your surgery to be the most noticeable 48-72 hours after surgery. Bruising and swelling usually begin to lessen 4-5 days after surgery. Bruising will start to fade in 10-14 days.

You may minimize swelling by sleeping with your head elevated on several pillows.

If the swelling worsens rapidly or gets increasingly tender, contact your physician.

If your wound bleeds enough that the blood heavily soaks through the outside of your bandage, do the following:

Remove the bandage. If the site is slowly bleeding, but not gushing blood, then place a clean gauze on the wound and hold continuous pressure for 15-20 minutes. Reapply pressure for another 20 minutes if necessary (no peeking).

Reinforce the bandage with additional gauze and tape.

If the bleeding does not stop or if the bleeding is severe, renew pressure and contact your physician for further instructions. If there is substantial bleeding that does not resolve with pressure, please proceed to the nearest emergency room, or call 911 for assistance.

Begin wound care 24 hours after surgery as directed.

### **INFECTION:**

It is normal for your wound to be slightly sore and pink.

If the area becomes increasingly tender, red, warm, or if you develop fever and chills, then contact your physician.

### **DIETARY RESTRICTIONS:**

If your surgery involved your lips or mouth, avoid hot liquids and foods for the first two to three hours after surgery. Eat soft foods and be careful brushing your teeth until sutures are removed. Do not drink alcoholic beverages for 48 hours.

Do not smoke for 3 weeks after surgery. Smoking is bad for wound healing.

### **DAILY WOUND CARE:**

Always wash your hands with soap and water before your daily wound care.

Gently remove your bandage 24 hours after surgery. Then change the dressing each day or whenever it becomes wet, according to these instructions:

Gently clean the area with cotton swabs dipped in warm soapy tap water.

As you clean the area, remove all crusty material. If you cannot easily remove the crust, soak the area with wet gauze for 15-20 minutes. Do not let thick crusts or scabs form. Your wound will heal faster if you keep it clean and moist.

After cleaning the wound, pat the area dry with clean gauze or cotton-tipped swabs.

Next, use a clean cotton swab to apply vaseline/petrolatum jelly. Do not use Neosporin ointment.

Cover the area with nonstick gauze (Telfa) or a band aid. Secure the dressing with paper tape.

Repeat wound care once a day until wound is completely healed.

*It is an old wife's tale that a wound heals faster if it is exposed to air and allowed to dry out. The wound will heal faster with a better cosmetic result if it is kept moist with ointment and covered with a bandage. Do not let wound dry out.*

### **WOUND HEALING:**

1 week after surgery a red halo of new skin will form around the outside of the wound.

The center of the wound will appear yellowish-white and produce some drainage.

The pink halo will slowly migrate in toward the center of the wound until the wound is covered with new shiny pink skin (this may take 4-6 weeks for small wounds, and 6-8 weeks for larger ones, and much longer if on your legs). It may still be red to dark pink in color, fading over the next few weeks or months.

There will be no more drainage when the wound is completely healed. You can stop dressing the wound daily at this point.

It will take 6 months to a year for the redness to fade.

Massaging the area several times a day for several minutes after the wound is completely healed will help the scar to soften and normalize after. Begin massage only after healing is complete.

Patients frequently experience itching after their wound appears to have healed because of the continued healing under the skin. Plain Vaseline or petroleum jelly will help relieve the itching.

### **WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR PHYSICIAN:**

Your wound continues to bleed after you have applied firm pressure for 20 minutes.

Acetaminophen has not relieved your discomfort.

Your wound becomes increasingly sore, tender, red, warm, or rapidly swells.

**During business hours call our office at 802- 864-0192 if you have any questions or concerns. After hours: please call 802- 847-4570 or 1-800 - 358-1144 and ask to have your surgeon paged.**