

Home Instructions for Sutured Wounds

WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS:

- Leave the pressure dressing on the wound for 48 hours. Keep it dry.
 - These dressings are applied tightly & securely to decrease bleeding and swelling.
- After 2 days, the dressing can be removed. Often it is easier to remove if first soaked in the shower. Once removed, gently clean the area with regular soap and water.
- Do not scrub the area!
- Apply **ONLY PLAIN PETROLATUM** to the surgical site **at least once daily** to prevent scabbing until the stitches are removed.
 - Moist wounds heal faster and better than wounds that scab over.
 - Do not use antibacterial ointment (neosporin, polysporin, etc.) because of the risk of allergic reactions.
- Clean the wound and re-bandage daily. If you are unable to keep a bandage securely over the wound, at least cover the wound with a layer of plain petrolatum at all times.

SUPPLY LIST:

- Plain petrolatum
- Cotton swabs
- Gentle soap
- Nonadhesive dressings
- Paper tape
- Ice packs

PAIN:

- If necessary, apply ice packs for 5-10 minutes hourly over the bandage to reduce pain and swelling.
- Elevate the surgical site to minimize swelling.
 - For surgery on the head/neck, sleeping in a recliner can help.
 - For surgery on an arm/hand, consider using a sling throughout the day.
 - For surgery on a leg, elevate your leg as much as possible. Avoid excessive exertion (prolonged standing, walking).
- We recommend acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
 - You may take up to 2 **extra strength acetaminophen** (1000mg) and repeat every 8 hours. If you need pain relief in between, you can take 2 ibuprofen tablets (400mg) and repeat every 6 hours – however avoid ibuprofen the first 3 days after surgery.
 - If your doctor has given you prescription pain medication, it may already contain acetaminophen and additional acetaminophen should not be taken.
 - *Do not exceed 3000mg of acetaminophen or 2400mg of ibuprofen in a 24-hour period.*
- For any non-resolving or non-improving pain, contact our office.

OPTIMAL HEALING:

- Avoid strenuous activity (heavy lifting, bending over, exercise) for at least 1 week to minimize bleeding risk and minimize tension on the stitches. If your surgery was on the back, arm, or leg, avoid strenuous activity for 2 weeks.
- Avoid alcohol for 2 days, as this can thin your blood and cause bleeding.
- Avoid smoking for at least 3 weeks, as it delays wound healing. It is best to stop smoking overall.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Initially, bruising, swelling, and pain are expected. These typically resolve in 1-2 weeks. Wounds on the hands, legs, and feet can take even longer.
 - The more active you are, the more likely you could experience swelling and pain.
 - Swelling and discomfort are common on hands and legs because gravity causes swelling to pool in these areas.
 - Your wound could become red, raised, or bumpy because of the internal stitches, which will gradually improve over 3 months as the internal stitches dissolve.
- It can take up to 6-12 months to see what the final scar looks like. Everyone is different and heals differently.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE...

- Bleeding: The pressure dressing over your wound helps stop bleeding. Any bleeding that you notice can usually be easily stopped with **direct firm pressure**. Do not remove the dressing. Elevate the site and apply constant pressure over the dressing for **20 min** without checking. **Repeat this for another 20 min** if there is still some bleeding. If the pressure dressing becomes completely saturated with blood or if you experience active bleeding that does not resolve with 40 min of pressure, notify the office.
- Concerns for infection: If you experience signs of infection such as fever, chills, sweats, increasing redness, swelling, warmth, yellow drainage, or increasing pain, notify the office. However, some redness over and along the stitch line is normal and expected.

Home Instructions for Skin Grafts

WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS:

- For the **graft site**, leave the pressure dressing on for at least 7 days. Keep it dry.
 - If the pressure dressing comes off, there *may be* a yellow dressing sewn into place. **DO NOT REMOVE ANY DRESSING THAT HAS STITCHES CONNECTING IT TO THE WOUND.** This dressing should stay in place until you return to our office. Not all pressure dressings will have this second, yellow dressing with stitches
 - Pressure dressings are intentionally tight to decrease bleeding, swelling, and pain.
- For the **donor site**, which is the place where the skin graft was taken from, leave the pressure dressing on for 48 hours. Keep it dry.
 - After 2 days, the dressing can be removed. Often it is easier to remove if first soaked in the shower. Once removed, gently clean the area with regular soap and water. Do not scrub!
 - Apply **ONLY PLAIN PETROLATUM** to the site **at least once daily** to prevent scabbing until the stitches are removed.
 - Moist wounds heal faster and better than wounds that scab over.
 - Do not use antibacterial ointment (Neosporin, polysporin, etc.) because of the risk of allergic reactions.
 - Clean the wound and re-bandage daily. If you are unable to keep a bandage securely over the wound, at least cover the wound with a layer of plain petrolatum at all times.

SUPPLY LIST:

- Plain petrolatum
- Cotton swabs
- Gentle soap
- None adhesive dressings
- Paper tape
- Ice packs

PAIN:

- If necessary, apply ice packs for 5-10 minutes hourly over the bandage to reduce pain and swelling.
- Elevate the surgical site to minimize swelling.
 - For surgery on the head/neck, sleeping in a recliner can help. For surgery on an arm/hand, consider using a sling.
 - For surgery on a leg, elevate your leg as much as possible and avoid prolonged standing or walking.
- We recommend acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
 - You may take up to 2 **extra strength acetaminophen** (1000mg) and repeat every 8 hours. If you need pain relief in between, you can take 2 ibuprofen tablets (400mg) and repeat every 6 hours – however avoid ibuprofen the first 3 days after surgery.
 - If already have prescription pain meds with acetaminophen, additional acetaminophen should not be taken.
 - *Do not exceed 3000mg of acetaminophen or 2400mg of ibuprofen in a 24-hour period.*
- For any non-resolving or non-improving pain, contact our office.

OPTIMAL HEALING:

- Avoid strenuous activity (heavy lifting, bending over, exercise) for at least 1 week to minimize bleeding risk and minimize tension on the graft. *Rest is important because your graft needs to form a new blood supply to survive.*
- Avoid alcohol for 2 days, as this can thin your blood and cause bleeding.
- Avoid smoking for at least 4 weeks, as it can cause the graft to fail and not survive. It is best to stop smoking overall.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Initially, bruising, swelling, and pain are expected. These typically resolve in 2-3 weeks.
 - The more active you are, the more likely you could experience swelling and pain.
 - Swelling and discomfort are common on hands and legs because gravity causes swelling to pool in these areas.
 - Your wound could become red, raised, or bumpy because of the internal stitches, which will gradually improve over 3 months as the internal stitches dissolve.
- The surface of your graft may initially look deep purple or even black for 1-2 weeks. **DO NOT try to remove any part of this scab/crust.** *Keep the graft moist with petrolatum to ensure survival.* Slowly, over 3-6 weeks, the graft should appear pink. Grafts often require 6-8 weeks to fully heal. In some cases, it takes longer.
- It can take up to 6-12 months to see what the final scar looks like. Everyone is different and heals differently.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE...

- Bleeding: The pressure dressing over your wound helps stop bleeding. Any bleeding that you notice can usually be easily stopped with **direct firm pressure**. Do not remove the dressing. Elevate the site and apply constant pressure over the dressing for **20 min** without checking. **Repeat this for another 20 min** if there is still some bleeding. If the pressure dressing becomes completely saturated with blood or if you experience active bleeding that does not resolve with 40 min of pressure, notify the office.
- Concerns for infection: If you have signs of infection such as fever, chills, sweats, increasing redness, swelling, warmth, yellow drainage, or increasing pain, notify the office. However, some redness over and along the stitch line is normal.

Home Instructions for Wounds Healing Without Sutures

WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS:

- Leave the pressure dressing on the wound for 48 hours. Keep it dry.
 - These dressings are applied tightly & securely to decrease bleeding and swelling
- After 2 days, the dressing can be removed. Often it is easier to remove if first soaked in the shower. Once removed, gently clean the area with regular soap and water
- Do not scrub the area!
- Apply **ONLY PLAIN PETROLATUM** to the surgical site **at least once daily** for at least 3 weeks or until fully healed. Try to avoid a scab from forming.
 - Moist wounds heal faster and better than wounds that scab over
 - Wounds on scalp and hands may require petrolatum daily for 4-6 weeks or longer.
 - Wounds on the legs may require petrolatum daily for 8-12 weeks or longer.
 - Do not use antibacterial ointment (Neosporin, Polysporin, etc.) because of the risk of allergic reactions
- Clean the wound and re-bandage daily. If you are unable to keep a bandage over the wound, at least cover the wound with a layer of plain petrolatum at all times. Socks & stockings can help secure bandages on legs.

SUPPLY LIST:

- Plain petrolatum
- Cotton swabs
- Gentle soap
- None adhesive dressings
- Paper tape
- Ice packs

PAIN:

- If necessary, apply ice packs for 5-10 minutes hourly over the bandage to reduce pain and swelling
- Elevate the surgical site to minimize swelling.
 - For surgery on the head/neck, sleeping in a recliner can help.
 - For surgery on an arm/hand, consider using a sling throughout the day.
 - For surgery on a leg, elevate your leg as much as possible. Avoid excessive exertion (prolonged standing, walking)
- We recommend acetaminophen or ibuprofen
 - You may take up to 2 **extra strength acetaminophen** (1000mg) and repeat every 8 hours. If you need pain relief in between, you can take 2 ibuprofen tablets (400mg) and repeat every 6 hours – however avoid ibuprofen the first 3 days after surgery.
 - If you already have prescription pain meds with acetaminophen, additional acetaminophen should not be taken.
 - *Do not exceed 3000mg of acetaminophen or 2400mg of ibuprofen in a 24-hour period*
- For any non-resolving or non-improving pain, contact our office.

OPTIMAL HEALING:

- Avoid strenuous activity (heavy lifting, bending over, exercise) for at least 2 days to minimize the risk of bleeding.
- Avoid alcohol for 2 days, as this can thin your blood and cause bleeding.
- Avoid smoking for at least 3 weeks, as it delays wound healing. It is best to stop smoking overall.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Initially, bruising, swelling, and pain are expected. These typically resolve in 1-2 weeks. Wounds on the hands, legs, and feet can take even longer. The more active you are, the more likely you could experience swelling and pain.
 - Swelling and discomfort are common on hands and legs because gravity causes swelling to pool in these areas
- *Tightness, itchiness, and numbness* can occur, and this improves over several months.
- You may notice *small amounts of clear or golden-tinged drainage* from the wound until it is fully healed. This drainage is normal from the healing tissue and from any residual swelling.
- It can take up to 6-12 months to see what the final scar looks like. Everyone is different and heals differently

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE...

- **Bleeding:** The pressure dressing over your wound helps stop bleeding. Any bleeding that you notice can usually be easily stopped with **direct firm pressure**. Do not remove the dressing. Elevate the site and apply constant pressure over the dressing for **20 min** without checking. **Repeat this for another 20 min** if there is still some bleeding. If the pressure dressing becomes completely saturated with blood or if you experience active bleeding that does not resolve with 40 min of pressure, notify the office.
- **Concerns for infection:** If you experience signs of infection such as fever, chills, sweats, increasing redness, swelling, warmth, yellow drainage, or increasing pain, notify the office. Some redness immediately around the wound is normal.
 - Wounds healing without stitches are actually less likely to become infected because bacteria drain out more easily and do not build up.