

Wound Care Instructions after Skin Surgery

Please take it easy for the rest of today and tomorrow. Do not lift more than 20 pounds and avoid physical activity that raises your blood pressure. Keep the surgical site elevated above the heart as much as possible the first two days after surgery. Apply ice packs over our dressing (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) as much as possible the rest of the day after surgery. This really helps to keep the pain, swelling, and bruising to a minimum.

To ensure a well-healed wound with minimal scar, please follow these instructions:

- 1) Please leave our pressure dressing on for 7 days, without getting it wet.
- 2) After 7 days, carefully remove our dressing and wash the surgery site with soap and water.
- 3) Apply a small amount of plain Vaseline (white petroleum jelly) and cover with a new bandage (change as needed until healed). Studies have shown that Vaseline works just as well as triple antibiotic cream, but has no allergic reactions. The healing process can take 2-5 weeks (or even longer on the lower legs). Dissolvable stitches normally fall out in 2-4 weeks. Please do NOT use hydrogen peroxide or topical antibiotic creams on dissolving stitches because these may dissolve the stitches too early.

Bleeding: If your surgical site starts bleeding through the dressing, don't panic! Use good first aid by applying **firm and constant pressure** right over the dressing/surgical site with a gauze or clean towel for **15 minutes!** Use a clock to time this, as it will seem like an eternity. Gently let off the pressure and see if the wound starts bleeding again. If it starts bleeding again, apply pressure for **another 20 minutes without peeking!** If it starts bleeding again, please call **541-258-7546** and press option **2** (or if there is life-threatening bleeding, call 911). If the bleeding stops with pressure, you can apply a pressure dressing by folding a clean gauze in half several times so it is slightly larger than the surgical wound and tape or band-aid this into place with moderate pressure (stretch the tape or band-aid across the wound before sticking it to the skin).

Pain: Pain after skin surgery is common, but is usually mild (like a bruise) and easily controlled with Tylenol (acetaminophen) and ice compressions as above. Avoid blood thinning pain relievers such as ibuprofen or naproxen. Most patients will never need or use prescription pain medication, but if you need it and the doctor did not prescribe it, please call the office during the day as there are no 24hour pharmacies nearby (i.e. don't wait until midnight to call).

Infection: Redness and mild tenderness around the surgical wound is very common, but if the wound has red streaks, is getting progressively painful or swollen, has discharge (pus), or you are experiencing fevers or chills, the wound may be infected. Infection after skin surgery is rare (about 1% of the time), but if you feel you have an infection, please call us.

Suture Reactions: Rarely, the deep stitches do not dissolve normally and at ~6-8 weeks they form a bump under the skin or come to the surface as a white-head. You may see the end of a thread sticking out and you can pull this out with tweezers. This reaction will go away in several weeks even if you do nothing. If painful or worrisome, please contact us.

After 2 weeks, please feel free to massage the scar line with or without silicone oil (such as ScarAway®). There is some mild evidence that this can help the cosmetic look of the final surgical scar.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call our office at **541-258-7546**.