



POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AND WOUND CARE FOR HEALING BY SECONDARY INTENT

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Post-Operative Instructions

The First 24-48 Hours: Apply an ice pack to your surgical site throughout the day while you are awake. Apply the ice pack for about 20 minutes at a time. This should be placed over the top of your dressing. If you do not have an ice pack, you can use a frozen bag of vegetables (peas or corn work well). Wrap a washcloth around the bag and hit it on a counter so that the contents of the bag become "pebbly" and are not solid ice block. Apply this directly over the bandage. Do not apply ice directly on to the skin.

Bruising and Swelling: There may be bruising near or around the surgical site. This is normal and it could last up to a week. Swelling is also normal. It usually occurs and increases for 24 to 48 hours after surgery, and then begins to improve. If the surgical area is on the face, head or neck, sleep with head elevated about 30 degrees the first 24 to 48 hours following your surgery. This will help keep swelling down.

Bleeding: If bleeding occurs, **DO NOT** remove bandage. Apply continuous pressure with a washcloth or gauze for 20 minutes. If the bleeding persists, repeat the pressure for an additional 20 minutes. **If bleeding continues, or you develop a large swollen, purple area around the surgical site, you should notify our office immediately. Please DO NOT go to the emergency room without attempting to contact our office first.** If the bleeding stops, clean your surgery site and put a new dressing on as directed on this sheet. (Look at instructions on the back of this sheet).

Activity: Avoid all strenuous activities and exercises until suture are removed. These activities can cause the stitches to "pop" or break and may also cause a localized hematoma, both of which can affect the healing process.

Discomfort: **DO NOT** use aspirin, aspirin-containing products, ibuprofen or alcohol for the first 48 hours after surgery. If you experience discomfort, you may take Tylenol (Acetaminophen) or Extra Strength Tylenol as directed on the bottle. The doctor may also prescribe a mild narcotic (which must be written and handed to you to take to the pharmacy) in place of Tylenol.

Infection: Some soreness and redness is expected. However, if the area becomes **very (severely) sore, red, and/or hot to the touch, or you develop a fever, please notify us.** It is possible the area may be infected and the doctor will likely prescribe an antibiotic.

Fibrin: It is normal, and anticipated that for the first 2 weeks the body will secrete fibrin (a thick, yellowish protein material) to try to cover the surgical area. This is not a sign of infection. This fibrin will act like a plug over the surgical site. The area will sunken in if the fibrin is left in place.

WOUND CARE AFTER PRESSURE BANDAGE COMES OFF

Cleaning and Replacing the Bandage on your Surgical Site:

- 1) After the first 48 hours, begin once-a-day cleaning of the surgical site using mild soap and tap water. You can use Q-tip or washcloth to clean the wound area. DO NOT use cotton balls (this can pull the stitches causing the wound to open). Gently remove any dried blood or crusting and rinse well with tap water. Do this until there is no fresh or dried blood.
- 2) Adequate cleaning will prevent a scab from forming. This is important since a scab is destructive to good wound healing and may lead to a widened or more noticeable scar.
- 3) After cleaning, apply a thick coat of Vaseline or Aquaphor. Cover the site with a non-stick Telfa dressing and secure all sides of the bandage with paper tape. A four-sided adhesive bandage may also be used to cover the wound. You want to keep the surgical site moist with ointment and covered with a bandage until the wound has completely healed. Exposure to air causes scabbing and prevents the wound from healing properly.

Follow-Up Care

- Return to our office for suture removal, wound check and/or bandage change in _____ days.
- Firmly massage the scar starting 4 weeks after surgery, or 4 weeks after the wound has closed. This will help the body absorb the inside dissolvable sutures and help soften the scar.
- Return to the clinic in 3 months if the scar is still firm and/or hard.
- Have a complete skin check in 6 months from your surgery date, and every 6 months after that for 2 years.

When to Call the Doctor:

- If you have bright, red bleeding from the wound, that does not stop after applying direct pressure for 40 minutes.
- If a large, swollen, purple area is noted around the surgery site.
- If severe inflammation (redness, tenderness, swelling, warmth) or red streaks appear near the wound or you develop a fever.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please call our office 24 hours a day at **303-368-8611**.