

Wound Care for Open or Sutured Wounds Mohs Surgery Clinic

This handout tells you how to care for your wound or sutures once you are home. We will review this with you. If you have any questions after you go home, please call the phone number at the end of this handout.

When to Do Wound Care

You should start wound care on _____
Keep your dressing clean and dry until then. Clean your wound one time a day until the skin has healed or until the sutures are removed.

Care of the Wound

1. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
2. Take off the old dressing. If it sticks, wet the edges of the dressing with water, or remove it in the shower.
3. Shower once a day with the bandage off or clean the area under running tap water. Gently wash with soap and water, then rinse and pat dry.
4. Apply Vaseline® (white petrolatum) in a **thin** layer. Use a clean finger to apply the Vaseline over the sutures or open wound bed.
5. Cover your wound with a clean bandage. Use a Band-Aid® thick enough to soak up any drainage and protect the wound.

Gelfoam® may be put on your wound to stop bleeding. It may come off as the wound is being cleaned. **Do not** force it off. If it remains on the wound, it will dissolve over time.

Bleeding

- Apply direct pressure by pressing firmly over the site for 30-45 minutes (timed by the clock). If

bleeding has not stopped, use pressure for 15-30 more minutes (timed by the clock).

- **If bleeding still has not stopped, call the clinic where you were seen (numbers listed below), or go to your local emergency room.**
- Reinforce, but do not remove the soiled bandage unless told to do so. You could disturb the clot.

Swelling and Bruising

This is normal but goes away in 2-3 weeks. If your wound is on your face, head, or neck:

- Sleep with your head raised on 2 pillows to reduce swelling.
- Avoid bending with your head below heart level.
- Swelling around the eyes and neck is normal if surgery was to the forehead, eye area, nose, or cheeks.
- Swelling will be worse in the morning and improve during the day.

If your wound is on your arm or leg:

- Wounds on the arm or leg may heal more slowly than other areas. Keep your arm or leg raised as much as you can. This will help prevent swelling and speed healing.
- Use a compression stocking or Ace® wraps if told to do so.

If told to apply ice or cold compress to reduce swelling:

- **Do not** apply ice right on the skin. Ice should be placed in a plastic bag then wrapped in a towel and applied to the bandaged wound.
- Ice should be kept on for only 15 minutes at a time.

Pain Control

Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, you may take both Tylenol® or ibuprofen to help control your pain. We recommend:

- Tylenol® 1000mg every 6-8 hours
- Ibuprofen 600mg every 6 hours

You may take them together every 6-8 hours or taking one type alone and then the other type 3-4 hours later. Repeat this pattern, alternate medicines every 3-4 hours.

If prescribed a narcotic pain medicine, do not drink or drive while you are taking it.

It is best to take narcotics with food to prevent nausea/vomiting. They may also cause constipation. You may use over the counter stool softeners as needed. Limit use of over-the-counter Tylenol® (acetaminophen) if you are given a prescription that has acetaminophen in it.

Discharge pain medicine:

If you have a sudden increase in pain that is not helped by pain medicines and ice compresses, please call the clinic where you were seen. You may have bleeding under your skin and need treatment.

Activities

- **Do not** do heavy activity for the first 2 days or as instructed.
- **No** swimming or use of hot tubs until your wound is fully healed.
- If you have stitches on the cheek or in the mouth area, **do not** chew on that side and talk as little as you can. Eat soft foods and rinse your mouth after eating or drinking. Avoid smoking.

Infection Control

Infection is not common when the wound is well cared for. If you notice any of these signs of infection, please call the clinic.

- Fever greater than 101°F
- Increased pain or swelling of the wound
- Pus or smelly wound drainage
- Redness spreading out from the wound
- Warmth around the wound site

Antibiotic medicine:

Scarring

All wounds cause some scarring. Time improves most scars. Cover-up make up may be used after the wound has healed. Sunscreen should be used on scars after healing. Some people may develop very thick scars, or keloids, which may need extra medical care. Call our office if this occurs and we will schedule a follow up visit.

Who to Call

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Dermatology/Mohs Clinic where you were seen.

Monday - Friday 8am - 4:30pm

UW Health E Terrace Dr Medical Center
Dermatology/Mohs Surgery
5249 E. Terrace Drive
Madison, WI 53718
(608) 265-1288, press option 2

UW Health Junction Rd Medical Center
West Mohs Surgery
451 Junction Road
Madison, WI 53717
(608) 263-6226

Toll free: 1-800-323-8942

After hours, holidays and weekends, the clinic number will be answered by the paging operator. Ask for the **Dermatology** or **Mohs Surgery doctor** on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2022 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority, All Rights Reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4251