

Breast Reconstruction Incision Care

Read this handout to learn more on how to care for your incision at home.

Incision Care

- Remove the outer dressing (gauze and tape) 48 hours after surgery, before your first shower.
- If your incision has Steri-Strips (white tape):
 - Leave them in place until they fall off on their own.
 - If they don't fall off prior to your first follow-up visit, they will be removed at that time.
- Mild drainage is normal.
 - If drainage occurs or clothing causes irritation, you may cover the area with dry gauze.
 - Otherwise, leave the incision **uncovered**.
- Check your incisions daily.

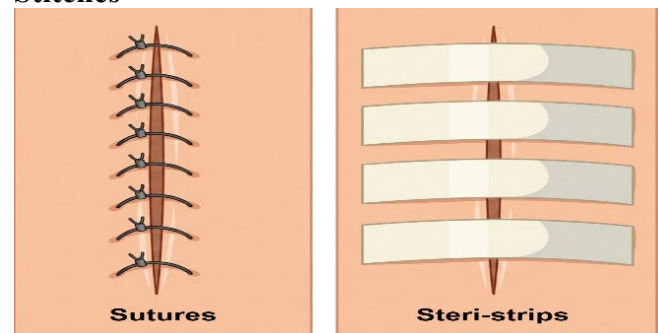
Hygiene

- Wait **48 hours after surgery** before your first shower.
- After that, take **daily showers** to reduce infection risk.
- Wash gently with **mild soap and water**.
- After cleaning pat dry with a clean towel or let air dry.
- **Avoid** the following until fully healed (4–6 weeks):
 - Baths
 - Hot tubs
 - Swimming

Wound Vac (If Applicable)

A wound vac is a **suction dressing** that promotes healing by holding the incision edges together and removing fluid from the wound. It will turn off automatically after 7 days or be removed in clinic in 5-7 days. Keep the device charged and **do not** get it wet.

Stitches



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Some stitches dissolve on their own. Some need removal in 1–2 weeks. If removal is needed, a clinic visit will be scheduled.

When to Call

Call if you notice any signs of infections or other symptoms such as:

- Bleeding that soaks the dressing
- Fever over 100.5°F
- Chills or shaking
- Foul-smelling drainage
- Pus or cloudy drainage (white, yellow, or green)
- Nausea or vomiting
- New rash

Go to the emergency department or urgent care if you have:

- Redness
- Increased swelling
- Cramping
- Uncontrolled pain
- Warmth in the arm or leg

Call 911 immediately if you have:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

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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 © 6/2026. University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8525