

JOHNSON DERMATOLOGY

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Care for Wounds with Stitches

How to Clean and Bandage the Wound

- Leave the initial bandage in place and keep the area completely dry for 24 hours unless otherwise advised.
- Clean with tap water and a Q-tip twice a day.
- After cleaning apply white petrolatum (Vaseline) or bacitracin (Polysporin) to keep the area moist. If using Vaseline, buy new Vaseline if the supply you already have is more than three months old. Then cover with a band-aid. If the area is too large to be covered with a band-aid, then use Telfa and paper tape to bandage the wound. Your pharmacy will have these bandage supplies. Do not let the area dry out and become scabbed.
- Continue the above steps until all of the stitches are removed.
- Two weeks after the stitches are removed you may begin using an over-the-counter scar pad to improve the appearance of the scar if desired. These can be purchased in any pharmacy without a prescription.

How to Limit Physical Activity

- Avoid vigorous physical activity while the stitches are in place – this includes heavy lifting, running, and other sporting activities. Avoid activities that pull or stretch on the area with stitches.
- Do not put the stitches completely under water – this means no swimming and no bathing in a bath. In the shower, the area can be exposed to running water for a few minutes each day.
- If the wound is on the lower leg, keep the affected leg elevated to the level of the hip as much as possible and avoid unnecessary walking. This is to avoid excessive swelling and slow wound healing.

Continued on Other Side

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Care for Wounds with Stitches (Continued)

Stop Smoking

- Smoking interferes with wound healing. If you smoke after your skin surgery, you have a greater risk of infection and poor wound healing. This can result in excessive scarring. Do not smoke for at least two weeks after your skin surgery. Please use this as an opportunity to quit smoking forever.

How to Manage Pain

- You may take Tylenol for the pain associated with the procedure. The Tylenol is most effective if you take the first dose before the numbing medicine has worn off. You may take the Tylenol as often as directed on the bottle. If the pain is not controlled by the Tylenol, then call our office.

How to Handle Problems

- If you have bleeding from the wound, then elevate the area and apply firm and constant pressure to the wound with a clean gauze or cloth. You should hold pressure for fifteen minutes without looking. Use a clock or a timer to count the fifteen minutes. If bleeding continues, then repeat the above procedure but use an ice pack over the cloth to hold pressure. If this does not work, then contact us.
- If you have excessive swelling, elevate the area and apply an ice pack for fifteen minutes out of every hour while awake. If the swelling continues, then contact us.
- Excessive redness, swelling, pain or drainage from the wound are possible signs of an infection. If you notice any of these signs, then contact us.
- If you have these or any other problems, contact us during regular business hours at 479.649.3376.