



Wound Care After Surgery

Dressing Materials & Instructions

- Telfa® or non-adherent dressing pads
- 4 x 4 gauze or cotton pads (like those for removing make-up)
- Gloves (non-powdered, non-latex)
- Micropore paper tape or Band-aids
- Topical ointment such as Vaseline™ petrolatum, Aquaphor®
- Do not use Polysporin®, Neosporin®, or other antibiotic ointments.

Other materials: _____

- ✓ Do not remove our pressure dressing for 24 hours after surgery.
 - ✓ **Wounds heal best when kept covered and moist. Avoid crusting or scabbing.** Keep your wound covered unless instructed otherwise.
 - ✓ **Remember, *STRESS the wound and it will stress YOU!***
1. For 24 hours; do not remove our pressure dressing unless soaked. Keep the wound dry.
 2. After 24 hours; Wash your hands, wear gloves, and remove the dressing. If there is crusting or scabbing, then get in the shower and soak it off. Do NOT forcefully rub the crust or your wound.
 3. Gently wash the wound with clean water (tap water or saline) and pat dry with a clean gauze or cotton pad. Do not use hydrogen peroxide.
 4. Apply an ointment (Vaseline™, Aquaphor®) on all suture lines using a clean, new Q-tip.
 5. Cover the wound with Telfa® or nonstick gauze and secure with tape. Band-aids may also be used, but make sure the sticky part of the Band-aid does not touch the wound.
 6. Repeat your dressing changes (steps 2 through 5) based on the amount of drainage. More drainage = more dressing changes. Leg wounds drain more than wounds on the chest or higher.
 7. It is rare to have an infection unless your drainage is pus-like (thick yellow, smelly).
 9. If your dressing was sewn on, then steps 2-5 are not needed. Keep the edges of the sewn on dressing moist with Vaseline™ petrolatum or Aquaphor® to prevent scabbing.

Activities after Surgery

- For 24 hours: 1) have someone with you if you took any medication to help you relax. 2) Do not get the dressings wet. You may shower after 24 hours. 3) Avoid alcohol.
- For one week after surgery, avoid any activity that pulls or stretches your wound, increases your heart rate, or rubs against your dressing (avoid sports, sex, vacuuming, bending below your waist, lifting more than 10 lbs).
- Face Surgery: do not bend your head below your waist. Elevate your head with 1 to 2 extra pillows when sleeping or lying down. Arm or Leg Surgery: raise the limb as much as possible above your waist when you are resting.

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Lip Surgery: eat soft foods. Keep your lip well lubricated with ointment (Vaseline™ petrolatum, Aquaphor®).

- Baths/Swimming/Hot Tub: avoid submerging the wound under water until it has sealed over.

When am I healed?

Remember that after your wound has sealed completely, there is still active healing underneath for many more months. Even when you no longer need a dressing, continue keeping a thin layer of Aquaphor® ointment on the wound for another 1-2 months. Firmness and healing sensations (mild itching, tingling, pulling) may still be felt 4-6 months later. Your scar will not be mature until 12 months or more after surgery. Patience, following wound care instructions, avoiding stress on the wound, and keeping your follow up appointments is all critical to optimize your results.

Swelling, Redness, Bruising and Drainage

It is normal to have some swelling, redness, and bruising - all of which will improve over time (days to weeks). A black eye is common if you had surgery around or above the eyes. **Elevating** the wound on extra pillows will reduce swelling. Applying a **cold compress** (bag of frozen peas) will also help reduce swelling. Once you get home, hold the ice pack against the dressing for about 10 minutes, several times an hour. You may continue this until bedtime and even the following day. Do not apply the cold compress directly on your skin.

There may be some clear wound drainage, which should stop after a few days. The drainage may be pinkish-yellow in color, which is normal. The drainage may last longer if your wound was not stitched closed completely.

What About Bleeding After Surgery?

Bleeding after surgery is uncommon but may be seen in the first 48 hours after surgery. If you have any bleeding, follow the instructions below.

1. Lie down, elevate the wound if possible, and apply **continuous, firm pressure** for at least 15 minutes. Do not stop applying pressure until 15 minutes have passed. Repeat up to 3 times.
2. If the bleeding has soaked your dressing, it should be removed and a new one placed.
3. If the bleeding has not stopped after three applications of 15 minute pressure, call our office. For after hours, call your physician at the number on page 1. We may ask you to return to the office to assess and care for your wound.
4. Do not go to the emergency room unless it is a true emergency. Most issues related to your surgery may be addressed in the office setting.

When Should I call the Office (Day Time: 832-663-6566. After Hours: 832-643-8592)

- Fever of 101° Fahrenheit or higher (38.3 ° Celsius)
- Bleeding not controlled by direct pressure
- Pain that increases each day or that is not relieved by over-the-counter medications

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TEXAS SURGICAL
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- Rapid or increasing swelling, heat, and ~~pain around the wound~~
- Reopening of the wound at any time
- Increased or expanding redness and warmth around the wound, or pus drainage from the wound

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