

Caring for your incision after surgery:

Incision care after surgery After surgery, you will need to take care of your incision as it heals. You will need to keep the area clean, change the dressing according to your doctor's instructions, and watch for signs of infection. During healing, you may notice some soreness, tenderness, tingling, numbness, and itching around your incision. There may also be 'mild' oozing and slight bruising, and a small lump may form. This is normal and no cause for concern.

Do:

- Do wait 24 hours before washing the incision area.
- Do look at the incision every day, checking for signs of infection (see below).
- Do make sure to keep clean/dry dressing on your incision. Wear your support band as long as possible.

Do not:

- Scrub or rub your incision
- Remove any tape strips (such as Steri-Strips) from incisions if any are used.
- Use lotion, creams, ointments, vitamin oils, or powder on incision.
- Expose incisions to sunlight or tanning booths
- Take a bath. Take showers until your stitches are removed, and the incision is completely 'closed'.
- During your shower, do not use direct water pressure on your incision. For this reason you may wish to leave your dressing on during your shower. Or, you may wish to cover to cover the dressing with a plastic bag or use another method of keeping it dry.
- 'Never' leave wet or damp dressing on your incision, immediately replace it with clean and completely dry dressing after your shower.

Call your health professional if you notice any of the following (Signs of an infection may include)

- A yellow or green discharge that is increasing/ a change in the odor of the discharge.
- A change in the size of the incision.
- Redness and hardening of the surrounding area.
- The incision or skin around the incision is hot to the touch.
- Fever more than 24-48 hours post op.
- Increasing or unusual pain.
- Excessive bleeding that has soaked through the dressing.

Changing a dressing Before you start, make sure you have: **gauze pads, surgical tape, a plastic bag, and scissors.**

1. Prepare supplies by opening the gauze packages and cutting new tape strips.
2. Wash hands
3. Loosen the tape around the old dressing.
4. Remove the old dressing.
5. At this point, you may want to clean the incision. (See instructions below.)
6. Wash your hands
7. Inspect the incision for signs of infection.
8. Hold a clean, sterile gauze pad by the corner and place over the incision.
9. Tape all four sides of the gauze pad.
10. Put all trash in the plastic bag
11. Seal plastic bag and throw it away.
12. Wash your hands.

To clean the incision:

- Gently wash it with soap and water to remove the crust.
- Do not scrub or soak the wound.
- Do not use rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, iodine, or mercurochrome, which can harm the tissue and slow wound healing.
- Air-dry the incision or pat it dry with a clean, fresh towel before reapplying the dressing
- DO NOT put ointments, creams, medications of any kind on your incision. This could trap bacteria inside your wound.

NOTE: *IF you have external stitches* (and most won't have the removable stitches any longer) they can cause some redness and swelling where the stitch enters the skin, along with mild irritation and itching. As the wound heals and begins to pull on the stitches, the soreness, especially when you move, may increase. Some drainage from the incision may be expected for the first few days after surgery, but if the discharge does not decrease after a few days, becomes bright red with blood, or contains pus, contact your doctor. Because of the way your incision is stitched the scar is healing on the inside. Therefore the incision may feel hard to the touch. This is normal. If the area around the incision (not the incision itself) becomes hard or increases in pain, you may have an infection.

If you suspect you may have an infection or your pain has increased, call your doctor as soon as possible.