

MD

Phone: (208) 884-3376

## WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUTURED WOUNDS

Leave bandage on and dry until \_\_\_\_\_  
Suture removal \_\_\_\_\_ Follow Up \_\_\_\_\_.

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

- ◆ Take it easy! Do not do anything that raises your blood pressure or heart rate for at least 2 days. No exercising, lifting, bending, stretching, or straining.
- ◆ Leave the Mohs bandaging alone and dry for **2 full nights**, starting today after surgery.
- ◆ Avoid drinking alcohol for 24-48 hours.
- ◆ Do not be surprised if you see a small amount of blood-tinged drainage. If your dressing becomes saturated with bright, red blood, remove the dressing. Then use clean gauze to apply gentle, but firm direct pressure to the wound for 10 minutes (no peeking). If the bleeding has not stopped apply pressure for another 10 minutes. **If the bleeding has not stopped after 20 minutes, or there is a large, swollen, purple area around the surgery site; call our office at (208) 884-3376 or the Emergency Contact Information below.** If the bleeding stops, then clean and redress the surgical site.
- ◆ Bruising and swelling around the surgical site is normal. If your surgery was near the eye, forehead, nose, or cheeks you may experience a black eye. Your eye may even swell shut. Do not be frightened if this happens. The swelling will resolve over the next several days, but will likely be worse in the morning and improve throughout the day as you are upright.
- ◆ If your surgical site is on the head or face, sleep with your head elevated about 30 degrees (a couple of pillows) for the first couple nights to decrease swelling. It may be helpful to sleep in a recliner.

If you  
bleed

Pain  
Control

- ◆ Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 500mg 1-2 tabs by mouth every 4-6 hours. Do NOT take more than 6 pills in a 24-hour period. Continue to take every 4-6 until you feel little to no pain at the end of dosing interval.
- ◆ The alternating regimen with Acetaminophen (500 mg) and Ibuprofen (600mg)  
Within 1 hour of surgery: Acetaminophen 500mg  
3-4 hours later: Ibuprofen 600mg  
3-4 hours later: Acetaminophen 500mg  
3-4 hours later: Ibuprofen 600mg  
-Continue to alternate until you feel little to no pain at the end of a dosing interval.

**Only take these if you have been told that they are okay for you, as some patients may not take them due to preexisting medical conditions (eg. Patients on Warfarin cannot take ibuprofen.)**

- ◆ Typically Tylenol and Ibuprofen are enough to manage post-operative discomfort, but depending on location or size Dr. Winchester may prescribe a mild narcotic. If this narcotic also contains acetaminophen do NOT take additional acetaminophen.

Ice the area
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- ◆ For the first few days you may apply ice to the surgical site every few hours while you are awake. Apply the ice bag about 15 minutes at a time **over the top of your dressing**. A bag of frozen vegetables (peas or corn) works very well also. Do not apply ice directly to the skin.
- ◆ Keep the dressing clean and dry for 2 nights. After 2 nights you may remove the dressing, get the wound wet, clean the wound, and redress the wound (as instructed on the next page). You can carefully bathe prior to the 2 nights – but keep the dressing dry.
- ◆ Most of the time an antibiotic is not needed. If prescribed an antibiotic please take as directed and complete the full course.

## **CLEANING AND PUTTING A NEW DRESSING ON YOUR SURGICAL SITE:** **\*2 days after surgery**

Clean and re- bandage the wound
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- ◆ ALWAYS **WASH YOUR HANDS** PRIOR TO CHANGING YOUR DRESSING
- ◆ It is often helpful to get the pressure bandage damp prior to removing it. Do NOT soak your wound/bandage in the tub and do NOT allow direct water pressure to hit the wound. Water can gently run over the site. You must then change the bandage as soon as you are done showering (see below instructions). Do not leave a wet bandage on the site.
- ◆ Carefully remove your dressing and begin DAILY cleaning and re-dressing of the wound.
- ◆ Use warm water and mild soap such as Dove® liquid, baby shampoo, or Cetaphil® cleanser to gently wash the area. Put a few drops of soap into a clean cup of warm water.

Use a cotton tip applicator (Q-tip®) or clean gauze to clean the wound. Gently remove any dried blood or excess crust by rolling the cotton tip applicator or gauze over the wound and then rinsing.  
**Do not use cotton balls.**

- ◆ After cleaning, apply a thin coat of Vaseline® or Aquaphor®. Then apply a new thin bandage (Band-Aid® or non-stick gauze and paper tape). The bandage only has to be large enough to cover the stitches
- ◆ Most wounds may be left uncovered 7 days after your surgery day. However, wounds that are on an area of the body that becomes easily irritated, or a central part was left to heal in on its own, may need to be covered with a bandage for an additional 1-2 weeks.
- ◆ Keeping your wound clean and moist will prevent a thick scab from forming. This is important because a thick scab will impair wound healing and may lead to a more noticeable scar.
- ◆ If a scab forms allow it to fall off on its own. Keep dressing the wound and keep it moist with Vaseline® or Aquaphor®. Do NOT pick the scab off.
- ◆ If **non-dissolvable** sutures are used, a separate appointment will be scheduled for suture removal. If **dissolvable** sutures are used, the sutures will typically dissolve in 7-14 days.
- ◆ After using Vaseline or Aquaphor for a week, switch to a white, unscented cream such as Cerave, Cetaphil, or Eucerin.

## **FOLLOW-UP CARE:**

1. Return to your general dermatologist for all other skin problems, including a skin exam in 6 months, and every 6 months after that, for the next 2 years.

## **CALL THE DOCTOR IF YOU NOTICE:**

- ◆ Bright red bleeding from your wound that does not stop after applying gentle, direct pressure for 20 minutes.
- ◆ A large, swollen, tender, purple area around either surgery site (hematoma).
- ◆ Redness or swelling that lasts more than 4 days.
- ◆ Red streaks around the wound.
- ◆ Increased bloody drainage, green or yellow drainage, or a foul smelling drainage from your wound.
- ◆ A fever greater than 101° F that continues after 3 days.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please call our office at (208) 884-3376.**

**For after-hours emergency, call Dr. Winchester's cell phone at 208-991-3685.**

- ◆ If you are unable to reach Dr. Winchester please go to your local hospital emergency department.

### **Care of your scar to get the best possible outcome:**

A scar is considered new for the first year. The majority of healing and scar improvement occurs within the first 2-3 months, but the scar will continue to soften and improve in appearance over years.

Sometimes scars require revision (laser, dermabrasion, surgical revision) to get the desired outcome. This decision is typically made after allowing the scar to improve for a few months on its own.

If after 2-3 months you do not feel that the scar has healed to your level of satisfaction, please call for an appointment and we will assess the scar and determine if revision would be helpful.

Remember that skin type and the healing response of the individual will impact the healing and appearance of the scar.

These are some steps you can take to improve the appearance of the scar (to help Mother Nature along).

**Sunscreen:** It is very important to protect your new scar from the sun. A new scar that is exposed to the sun can pigment (red- brown or even purplish color). The best way to avoid this is to protect the scar from ultraviolet light. This can be accomplished with bandages, sunscreen, or protective clothing and hats. An SPF of 30 is recommended and must be reapplied every 2-3 hours.

**Scar improvement creams/bandages:** My experience has shown that no scar cream is a miracle worker. Scars will improve in time with or without creams.

**Steri-strips:** Occasionally we place steri-strips over the site. You can gently wash the site right over the top of the steri-strips. Do not worry if they fall off, they are only meant to be on the site temporarily.

Place your cell phone on camera mode to scan this QR code to watch an instructional video on how to care for your wound:

