

UNIVERSITY STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES • Fact Sheet

**WOUND CARE RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Keep the initial bandage on your wound for 24 hours.
2. After 24 hours, remove the bandage, and clean the wound gently with mild soap and water. Do not use abrasive cleansers, like hydrogen peroxide, alcohol, or iodine.
  - Wash your hands well before cleaning the wound.
  - Apply soap and water with your hands instead of with a washcloth, which may pull on the wound.
  - Pat the area dry with sterile gauze; do not rub.
  - You may apply an antibiotic ointment (such as Bacitracin or Polysporin) to the wound with the first day's dressing changes. Afterwards, ointment is usually not necessary and may make the wound site too wet. Do NOT use ointment if the wound was closed with Dermabond skin adhesive because this will weaken the glue.
  - Apply sterile gauze or bandages to the wound, being careful not to touch the part of the bandage that will come in contact with the wound. If your wound was closed with Dermabond and a bandage is being used, do not place tape directly over the Dermabond glue, because removing the tape later can remove the glue.
3. Showering is permitted after 24 hours, but do not immerse the wound in water for a prolonged period of time (as with bathing, swimming, or washing dishes).
  - If Dermabond adhesive was used, immediate showering or bathing is permitted. However, exposure to water should still be brief. Do not scrub, soak, or expose the wound to prolonged wetness (including from heavy perspiration) until the adhesive has naturally sloughed off in 5-10 days.
4. Clean the wound and change your dressing once a day. Do this more often if your dressing becomes wet or dirty.
5. Keep the wound covered unless you are at home. After the first 24-48 hours you may leave the wound open to the air for short periods of time if you are at home. Be sure that nothing touches the wound while it is uncovered.
6. Keep the wound elevated for the first 1-2 days to decrease pain and swelling.
7. If Steri-Strips were used for wound closure, they will usually fall off on their own in 7-10 days.
  - Keep the wound dry for the first 24-48 hours. Then you can gently wash or shower with Steri-Strips in place, and pat the area dry with a clean towel.
  - Do not remove Steri-Strips early unless directed by your medical provider. You may trim the edges of the Steri-Strips if they start to curl. Do not rub or pull on them.
  - If Steri-Strips come off too early, you may be directed to reapply the Steri-Strips. In this case, bring the wound edges together and place the middle of the Steri-Strips on the wound. Smooth the ends down on the skin without stretching the Steri-Strips. Add more Steri-Strips to cover the wound, leaving small gaps between the strips to allow any fluid from the wound to drain.
  - If your Steri-Strips have not fallen off after 2 weeks, they should be removed. If you are directed to remove the Steri-Strips yourself, hold the skin down as you slowly remove the strips; do not pull hard. If needed, you can first soak the wound in a solution of equal parts water and hydrogen peroxide to loosen the Steri-Strips adhesive.

8. If the wound starts to bleed, cover it with a clean towel or gauze and apply direct, constant pressure for 5-20 minutes. If the bleeding stops, remove the bloody dressing, clean the incision, and apply a fresh dressing. If the wound does not stop bleeding after 20 minutes, continue to apply direct pressure and contact your medical provider.
9. For pain relief, take acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), or the medication prescribed by your healthcare provider. Take ibuprofen or naproxen with food to avoid an upset stomach. Follow the package instructions for safe dosing.
10. Monitor for signs of infection. A small degree of redness at the edge of the wound is normal. If the wound becomes more red, hot, swollen, painful, or drains fluid or pus, call for a same-day appointment to evaluate for possible infection.
11. Scabs may form as the wound heals. Do not pick at the scab or the skin around it.
12. Return for follow-up or removal of stitches as directed. The timing of suture removal is based on the location of the wound:
  - Face: 5 days
  - Eyelids: 5 days (3 days for low-tension wounds and up to 7 days for high-tension wounds)
  - Neck: 5 days
  - Scalp: 7-10 days
  - Trunk and upper extremities: 7 days
  - Lower extremities: 8-10 days
  - Digits, palm, and sole: 10-14 days
13. Use sunscreen regularly after the skin has healed to prevent sunburn and darkening of the skin. Limiting sun exposure for the first 6 months can be helpful.
14. A scar reduction ointment, like over-the-counter Mederma, may be used once the wound has fully healed. However, studies have not proven the effectiveness of this product.