

## UNIVERSITY STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES • Fact Sheet

**WOUND CARE RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Keep the initial bandage on your wound or laceration for 24 hours.
2. After 24 hours, remove the bandage, and clean the wound gently 1-2 times a day 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. Dry the surrounding skin with a clean towel.
  - You may apply an antibiotic ointment (such as 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.
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 until the adhesive has naturally sloughed off in 5-10 days.
4. 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 will be at home. Be sure that nothing touches the wound while it is uncovered.
5. Change any wet or dirty dressings as soon as possible.
6. If the wound starts to bleed, cover it with a clean towel or gauze and apply direct, constant pressure for at least 5 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 a few minutes, continue to apply direct pressure and contact your medical provider.
7. If **steristrips** were used, they will usually fall off on their own in 7-10 days.
  - Do not remove steristrips early unless directed by your medical provider. You may trim the edges of the steristrips if they start to curl. Do not rub or pull on them.
  - If your steristrips have not fallen after 2 weeks, they should be removed. If you are directed to remove the steristrips yourself, hold the skin down as you slowly remove the strips; do not pull hard.
  - If steristrips come off too early (from excessive wetness, etc.), you may be directed to reapply the steristrips. In this case, bring the wound edges together and place the middle of the steristrip on the wound. Smooth the ends down on the skin without stretching the steristrip. Add more steristrips to cover the wound, leaving small gaps between the strips to allow any fluid from the wound to drain.
8. 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.

9. Keep the wound elevated for the first 1-2 days to decrease pain and swelling.
10. 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.
11. Return for follow-up or removal of stitches as directed.
12. Use sunscreen regularly after the skin has healed to prevent sunburn and darkening of the skin. Limiting sun exposure for the first 6 months is helpful.
13. 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.