



POST-OPERATIVE CARE OF OPEN WOUNDS AND PURSE-STRINGS SUTURES WHERE THE CENTER IS HEALING IN AS AN OPEN WOUND

Materials needed:

- Vaseline ointment (**NEW** Tube/Jar, Not to be used for any other purpose). NOT Bacitracin or Neosporin.
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Q-tips
- 4 X 4 gauze squares
- Non-stick pads (Telfa)
- Medical grade paper tape
- Isopropyl Rubbing Alcohol and cotton balls (you may or may not need this)

Post-op days 1 & 2:

- Keep the pressure dressing in place for a **full 48 hours**.
- Do not get this dressing wet under any circumstances.
- Please take it easy for the first two days after surgery. You are at risk for post operative bleeding if you “over do it”.
- **No sports activities of any kind.**
- If you were prescribed oral antibiotics please take as recommended.
- It is best to avoid strenuous activity such as vigorous exercise, bending, stooping, straining or lifting for the first few days following surgery. Sometimes these activities can activate bleeding from the surgical site.

Approximately 48 hours post-op:

- You will either be returning to the office our staff to remove your pressure dressing or you will be doing this at home. We are happy to do this for you if you are not comfortable doing this on your own.
- **Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water and completely dry them before performing any dressing changes.** To remove the dressing you can lift one of the corners of the dressing and then use hydrogen peroxide soaked Q-tips to loosen the adhesive as you gently remove the dressing. Alternatively you can get the dressing wet and soft in the shower, which will make it easier to remove without pulling on the skin. Do NOT tear the dressing off rapidly as you could rip the skin.

Post-op days 3-7:

- Limit activities to low-impact/range-of-motion type exercises. No getting sweaty.
- Once the dressing has been removed you should use hydrogen peroxide soaked Q-tips to loosen any crusting along the wound edge. Do not soak the wound with peroxide, please use only enough to remove the crusts. If there is no crusting then peroxide is not necessary. **Scabs are BAD** and inhibit proper wound healing. All scabs must be gently loosened and removed.
- You can get the wound wet in the shower.
- Gently dry the area with sterile gauze pads.
- Apply a **THICK layer of Vaseline ointment.** This is perhaps the most important step! The Vaseline keeps the wound moist and provides the proper environment for wound healing. The wound should then be covered with a non-stick (telfa) pad.
- If the wound is still draining any amount of fluid the non-stick pad should be covered with 4 X 4 gauze to absorb any wound fluid. Telfa alone will not absorb this fluid.
- This dressing should be secured with medical grade paper tape.
- If the wound is small enough, you can use a Band-Aid or oversized Band-Aid of appropriate size instead.



- The above wound care regimen should be performed **twice a day**. It is very important that the wound be kept covered and moist with Vaseline ointment at all times.
- You may shower after the pressure dressing is removed. Please minimize direct water pressure on the wound area. Low shower water pressure is preferred. Please change this dressing for a new and dry one as detailed above immediately after showering. You may wash your hair with a mild shampoo.
- **If you are having difficulty getting the regular dressings to adhere you can de-grease the skin where the dressing is to stick with rubbing alcohol applied on a cotton ball. Permit the alcohol to completely evaporate, then apply the dressing.**
- You need to continue wound care until your wound is completely healed in. **Please continue wound care until instructed to stop by your provider.**
- Do not submerge the wound in a bathtub, hot tub or pool while the sutures are in or the wound is still open.

Post-op days 7 through suture removal (or until the wound is fully healed in):

- If your surgery was on your ears, scalp or body the sutures will likely be left in longer than 7 days. You should keep the incision covered with a light dressing or appropriately sized band-aid until suture removal. This should be changed once a day (or more frequently if the dressing gets wet, sweaty or soiled). You can use a thin layer of Vaseline under the telfa pad but peroxide should no longer be necessary.
- You may resume normal activities. Care should be taken with activities that cause extra stress or tension across the wound as undue force could open the wound. Please follow the verbal instructions you were given by your provider and please call the office with any questions.

Common questions during the Post-operative period:

What activities am I permitted to participate in during the post-operative period?

In all cases it is very important to rest for the first two days after surgery. Every wound requires a different period of inactivity during the post-operative period, your provider will provide you with specific instructions after your surgery. If you are unclear as to what activities you may safely perform please call the office. Wounds on the trunk and extremities can be torn open by activities such as Tennis and Golf and require a longer period of time before these activities may be resumed. If the wound is torn open it cannot be re-sutured and will take a few months to heal in.

What to do to minimize bleeding:

Do not take NSAID's (ibuprophen, naproxen, aleve, etc) or vitamin E for three days after your surgery. Also, do not take any aspirin for 3 days after surgery (**unless you take this by the recommendation of your primary care physician or cardiologist for a medical indication. In which case you should resume the aspirin therapy right away**). These products can lead to increased bleeding post-operatively. Limit activities as recommended. No heavy lifting for the first few post-operative days. It is common for the incision site to ooze a little blood or fluid



especially for the first few days after surgery. **Applying direct pressure to the bleeding area continuously for 20 minutes (no peaking) can usually control this.** If the area continues to bleed after this is done, please call our office **1-844-SUNDERM** so we can help.

What to do to minimize discomfort:

The local anesthetics administered during surgery wear off in a few hours. Usually we do not expect you to have excessive discomfort post-operatively. If you experience discomfort following surgery, take extra-strength Tylenol. You may take two tablets every 6 hours as needed. If you are still experiencing significant post-operative pain after taking Tylenol please contact our office **1-844-SUNDERM**.

What are the signs of infection?

It is normal for the wound to drain pink to red fluid for 4 or more days post-operatively. The area will often be somewhat swollen, slightly tender and a little bit red. Signs that your wound might be becoming infected include: any green or yellow drainage from the wound or on the dressing, any smell from the dressing, wounds that are very tender even to a gentle touch, wounds that are very red. If you note any of these signs developing in your surgical site please call our office immediately (**1-844-SUNDERM**), you may need additional treatment. Sometimes wounds that are healing in can develop a fibrin clot on the surface which has a yellow/tan color, this is not related to infection.

What to do to minimize swelling:

In order to minimize swelling and bruising, which is quite common after surgery, you may want to apply an ice bag, cold soda, or bag of frozen peas wrapped in a small clean towel to the bandaged area a few times a day. Sleeping with your head elevated helps as well. **Please note that bruising and swelling of the eyelids is common with any surgery around the eyes including the forehead and scalp. Your eye can even swell shut temporarily.** (It is possible for this to first occur up to 4 days [or more] after surgery)

What to do if you have ANY questions:

If you have any questions or concerns, please give us a call at **1-844-SUNDERM**. We can be reached 24 hours a day 7 days a week. If for some reason you cannot reach us and you are experiencing an emergency please proceed to the nearest emergency room.