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## How to Care for Your Surgical Wound

You play an important role in assuring proper wound healing. In order to achieve the best cosmetic outcome, it is essential that you take good care of your wound after surgery. Please read and follow the instructions below.

1. Limit physical activity for the next 48 hours. This will decrease the risk of bleeding and wound dehiscence (wound coming apart).
2. A tight bandage has been placed over your wound. Leave this in place for 48 hours. In addition to the top bandage, an adhesive bandage called Steri-Strips may have been placed directly on the skin. If Steri-Strips were applied, let them fall off on their own. Do not peel them off.
3. After removing the bandage, you should begin to clean the wound twice a day with antibacterial soap and water.
4. Cleaning should be followed by the application of a thick coat of Vaseline petroleum jelly (2 X per day). Do not use Polysporin or Neosporin because many people become allergic to these ointments. Keeping the wound moist with Vaseline prevents scab formation. A thick scab is undesirable because it slows the healing process.
5. Cover the layer of Vaseline with clean, dry gauze and tape.
6. Most pain and discomfort after surgery can be controlled with over-the-counter Extra-Strength Tylenol or Ibuprofen (Motrin). In some cases, you will be given a prescription for pain medicine. If so, these pills take the place of Tylenol. Call our office if you experience any severe pain.
7. Check your wound daily for evidence of infection. Extreme tenderness or redness can be signs of infection. You will normally have some tenderness, redness, and swelling after surgery. Other signs of infection include warmth and drainage of cloudy, yellow fluid.
8. If bleeding occurs, apply firm, constant pressure to the wound with clean gauze for 20 minutes. This usually stops minor bleeding. If the bleeding does not stop, call the office.
9. Again, some swelling after surgery is normal and expected. Extreme swelling, especially swelling that rapidly increases in size, can be a sign of bleeding under the skin. Notify us immediately if this occurs.
10. Return to the office when instructed by your doctor for suture removal and/or wound check.
11. Although your wound may appear well healed in 1-2 weeks, the incision site is still very weak. It will take 2-3 months for the skin to regain its strength. During that time, you should avoid activities that stretch or otherwise place tension on your wound. If the area is stretched, the scar may become wider and much more noticeable.
12. Do not smoke. Smoking hinders wound healing and can cause the healing skin to die and peel off.

There will be a scar and redness after surgery. This will decrease as healing progresses, but redness should be expected for as long as six months. While some scars are minimally visible after healing, other scars may be thick, red and/or tender. Everyone heals differently and, therefore, the final appearance of the scar cannot be predicted or guaranteed prior to surgery.