



## Wound care after surgery (dissolving stitches)

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This leaflet is for patients who have had skin surgery using dissolving stitches and explains things that you can do to look after your wound to lower the chance of infection and encourage healing.

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- **Keep the wound clean and dry for the first 48 hours**. If there is a dressing in place, leave this alone, providing that it is kept completely dry.
- After 48 hours, you can start showering but **do not** soak or submerge the wound in water, so no baths or swimming.
- **If you have dissolving stitches on the surface**, you can remove the dressing after 48 hours. Before removing the dressing, you must wash your hands with soap and water and then carefully take the dressing off. Do not touch the wound with your fingers.
- **If you have dissolving stitches under the skin**, you do not need to remove the surgical tape. The surgical tape will start to come off a bit at a time when you start showering. Ideally, the wound needs to be protected by the dressing for at least a week and left on for no longer than 2 weeks.
- Your wound may be a little painful for the first few days. Take paracetamol as required up to 4 to 6 hourly, up to maximum of 8 tablets within the 24 hour period, following the dosage advice on the packet.
- Slight post-operative bleeding may stain the dressing but requires no action. **However, if the bleeding is heavy, place some gauze on top of the original dressing and apply firm pressure for 10-15 minutes.** We advise you to set a timer to ensure the adequate time has passed.
- **Surgery, especially around the eye or on the forehead, can result in bruising.** This requires no treatment and will disappear over the course of a fortnight.
- Most surgical wounds heal without causing any problems. However, wound infections are one of the most common complications after surgery. This means that germs have started to grow in the wound, which can delay normal wound healing. Wound infections are usually treated with a course of antibiotics. **If, after a few days, the wound becomes more painful, looks red, inflamed or swollen, leaks liquid, pus or blood or smells unpleasant; then contact your GP or practice nurse as soon as possible for further assessment.**
- After all the stitches have dissolved (it may take up to 4 weeks for them to all fall off), the wound may look a little red and scabbed. Do not pick the scab or try to force it off.
- Once the scabbing has settled and the wound is no longer tender, regular massage with Vaseline or any moisturiser 2-3 times a day. This will help to flatten the edges, reduce the redness and help the scar blend into the surrounding skin.
- The scar will take up to 3 months to settle down completely.

- If the scar is in an area that is prone to excess stretching (e.g. the back), then extra care should be taken, especially after the stitches are removed. It may be sensible to cover the scar with surgical tape (given to you after your surgery) for a further fortnight.
- **You will receive a letter with the result of any tests taken during surgery within 6-8 weeks. Your GP will be informed of the results at the same time.** If you do not receive that letter, please contact us or your GP to chase it up for you.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or worries you may have with your doctor.

<b>Stitch information</b>	
Date of surgical procedure:	
Location of surgical procedure:	
Type of dissolving stitches (under the skin or on the skin):	
Number of dissolving stitches (on the surface):	

### **Contacting us**

Dermatology Clinical Admin Team (CAT 8): 0118 322 8145 (Option 1)

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**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

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