

ENT SURGICAL CONSULTANTS

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HEAD & NECK WOUND CARE (7/13)

Surface Stitches

Clean suture line (stitches) **three times a day** to remove drainage and crusting. Pour small amount of hydrogen peroxide into a clean container and dip cotton-tipped applicators (*Q-tips*, etc.) or cotton ball in the hydrogen peroxide. Begin at the top of the suture line and cleanse downward to keep solution away from the suture line. Remove as much crusting and debris as possible without disrupting the stitches or causing discomfort. Repeat this process with a dry cotton-tipped applicator or cotton ball to remove the hydrogen peroxide. Apply a thin film of any antibiotic ointment on the suture line using a cotton-tipped applicator. Although acceptable, it is not necessary to use a *Band-Aid* or dressing unless otherwise instructed. Keep the incision dry for 48 hours. Schedule the follow-up appointment to have the sutures removed.

Steri-Strips

Alternatively, if your surgeon placed *Steri-Strips* over your wound, no special care is required. You should keep this wound dry for 36 hours, then you may shower. Do not rub or remove these strips until they begin peeling off themselves.

Skin Adhesive or Skin Glue

If your surgeon used a thin adhesive, no special care is required. Although this wound may get wet immediately after the procedure, do not immerse the wound since this adhesive will dissolve within ten minutes. Otherwise, the adhesive will slowly peel off within one to two weeks.

General Advice

Take oral antibiotics and pain medicine as prescribed. The daily wound care regimen should be continued for about ten days following your operation. It is important to avoid sun exposure for all wounds while healing for one year after surgery to produce the best aesthetic result. Otherwise sunlight promotes pigmentation of the scar, making the scar more noticeable.

Drain Site

If your surgeon used a drain to prevent accumulation of blood beneath the skin after surgery, a bandage is usually placed over the drain after it's removed. The bandage should be replaced as needed, and the wound should be kept clean and dry during the first 48 hours after drain removal. Thereafter, this wound should be cleansed three to four times a day with hydrogen peroxide followed by a thin film of any antibiotic ointment until the crusting resolves (See *Stitches*).

If the following occurs, contact our office (815-725-1191).

- Increased redness or pus-like drainage.
- Separation of the incision line.
- Worsening (instead of improving) tenderness.