

OVERVIEW

An open wound (cut, scrape, etc.) heals over weeks or months. Some wounds require closure with paper tapes (Steri-Strips), glue (Dermabond, Skinstitch) or sutures (stitches, staples). All wounds heal better if they are cared for properly. When the skin is broken, bacteria can invade and produce infection- it is always important to watch for signs that indicate infection.

WOUND TREATMENT

- Your wound may be cleaned twice daily with diluted, ½ strength peroxide on a Q-tip to remove any excess clot or scab. Otherwise, gentle cleaning with soap and water is okay. The wound should then be covered with a thin layer of Antibiotic Ointment. Do NOT clean wounds that have been closed using Dermabond or Steri-Strips.
- You may get the wound wet for short periods of time, but do not soak the wound until it is fully healed. Steri-Strips (paper tapes) must be kept dry at all times!
- Dressings should be changed every time the wound is cleaned or if they become wet or soiled.
- For simple, clean lacerations, the dressing can be left in place for 24 to 48 hours; following that time, (if the wound can be kept clean) it may be left open to the air.
- Scalp wounds may be immediately washed to remove dried blood, but scrubbing over the laceration or use of hot water should be avoided. Scalp wounds do not usually require a dressing.
- Normally, healing wounds will have a certain amount of pain, swelling, redness, clear drainage, and warmth, but these should improve steadily over the first 2-3 days.

TREATMENT OF PAIN AND SWELLING

- Elevate the injured part to reduce both pain and swelling.
- A laceration should be pain-free in 24-48 hours. This time period may be longer if other tissue trauma is present.
- Pain may be treated with Acetaminophen (Tylenol), or Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.)

SUTURED WOUNDS (*STITCHES AND STAPLES*)

- Sutures are removed at a time when the wound is still weak. Care must be taken after suture removal not to hit or stress the wound.
- Steri-Strips may be placed across the wound after suture removal for additional support of the weak wound.
- A separate instruction sheet may be provided for those patients treated with a surgical adhesive.

SCARRING

- All wounds heal by producing a scar but scarring can be reduced by good wound care.
- Most scars will be red and prominent for many weeks, but will eventually return to a normal skin color and flatten out.
- Scars do not fully mature for at least 12 months.
- Scars are more prominent when exposed to intense sunlight. This may be lessened by wearing ample sunscreen when outdoors (always a good idea).
- Dark-skinned people may experience discoloration or lightening of the wound. This may be permanent or may require many months or years to return to its original color.
- Many people have had success using products such as Aloe, Vitamin-E Oil, Scar Therapy Strips and Mederma®.

PUNCTURE WOUND

- May be superficial or involve deeper layers of skin or underlying tissues.
- Are associated with a higher rate of infection due to the potential of a foreign body contaminating the wound.
- X-rays may be used to identify foreign bodies such as metal, glass or tooth.
- Advance imaging may be required for some types of foreign bodies.
- Antibiotics may be prescribed depending on the location and depth of the puncture.

- Some punctures of the foot may require the patient to elevate the site and avoid bearing weight. Crutches may be helpful for these patients.
- Follow-up care with your primary care physician in 24-48 hrs is very important.

ABCESS

A skin abscess is a collection of pus under the skin that is surrounded by inflamed tissue.

- Warm soaks and compresses should be applied 3-4 times a day.
- Antibiotics are often used in the treatment of skin abscesses.
- Sometimes the site must be surgically drained. Packing is often used to keep the wound open to insure proper drainage.

TETANUS VACCINATION

- If you receive a Tetanus vaccine, you may expect some local soreness and redness in the injection site for 2-3 days. Should you develop swelling, increased pain or fever, contact us or your primary care physician immediately.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics may be prescribed to treat or prevent infection.
- Oral steroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription today.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription tomorrow.
- ➔ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- ➔ Antibiotics and steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medication. This medication may offer significant symptom relief:

- For fever or pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent fever or pain.)

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- You experience fever, increased pain and/or increased swelling.
- You notice increased redness or red streaks, noticeable discoloration of the wound or drainage or a foul odor coming from the wound.
- Your wound does not appear to be healing as expected.

Follow-up as Instructed by the Physician.

- Return to Roswell Urgent Care Center in _____ days for a wound check and/or dressing change.
- Return to your Primary Care Physician in _____ days for a wound check and/or dressing change.
- Follow-up with _____ in _____ days.
- Return to Roswell Urgent Care Center in _____ days for suture/staple removal.