

Postoperative Wound Care

The importance of postoperative wound care to your surgical site cannot be over stressed. The care you take of yourself and your surgical wound is extremely important to the success of the procedure and to your recovery and well being.

There are several things that can happen following surgery.

1. **Bleeding:** Bleeding can occur following surgery. To reduce the possibility of bleeding, the following instructions are given.
 - a. Limit activities for at least 48 hours.
 - b. Keep the operative site elevated (if appropriate).
 - c. If surgery was on the face, head, or neck:
 - i. Avoid stooping or bending.
 - ii. Avoid straining to have a bowel movement.
 - iii. Sleep with your head and shoulders elevated on extra pillows.

Should bleeding occur, apply firm constant pressure on the bandage for 20 minutes!! Look to see if the bleeding has stopped. If the wound is still bleeding, apply firm constant pressure for another 20 minutes. If the area is still bleeding, call our office at 327-9521.

2. **Swelling:** Swelling occurs because surgery has caused a wound and your body reacts to that injury. To reduce the amount of swelling that may occur:
 - a. Apply an ice bag for 20 minutes each hour during the waking hours. If you do not have an ice bag, a “baggy” filled with cracked ice and wrapped with a thin towel will do nicely.
 - b. Keep your bandage dry.
 - c. Swelling is usually at its worst at 48 hours after surgery. It should decrease after this time.
3. **Pain:** Pain, postoperatively is generally slight. In nearly all cases, Extra Strength Tylenol will relieve any pain you may experience. If the wound or reconstruction is more extensive, Dr. Cottingham may prescribe a stronger pain reliever.
4. **Infection:** Infection seldom occurs when the wound care instructions have been carefully followed. If Dr. Cottingham has prescribed an antibiotic, please take it as directed until it is all gone.

Signs of infection are: Increased pain, swelling, redness or yellowish drainage several days after surgery.

Wound Care – Two Times Each Day, Starting 48 hours After Surgery

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Apply soap and water to suture line with cotton ball or Q-Tip to remove crusts from wound.
3. Dry wound thoroughly with clean soft cloth by blotting.
4. Apply thin layer of Polysporin ointment with Q-Tip.
5. Cover with clean dry dressing.

There will be a scar and redness in the scar after surgery. This will decrease as healing progresses, but redness should be expected as long as six months. Everyone heals differently, and the final scar appearance depends on the individual's ability to heal. In other words, some scars heal and can hardly be seen, while others become thick and/or tender. Due to the unpredictability in wound healing, the final appearance cannot be preoperatively ascertained; therefore, no guarantees can be implied or stated as to the final appearance of the scar.

Special Instructions:

1. Limited activities for at least 48 hours.
2. Keep head or surgery site elevated.
3. If bleeding occurs, apply constant, firm pressure as detailed above, call if bleeding doesn't stop.
4. Apply ice bag for 20 minutes of each hour during waking hours as needed for swelling.
5. Take Extra Strength Tylenol if pain is present, or if pain medication is prescribed, take as directed.
6. Follow instructions for wound care.
7. Notify our office immediately if bleeding will not stop or signs of infection occur: **Phone 327-9521**