

# POST SURGICAL INSTRUCTIONS

Patient Education provided by **Leslie Storey, MD**  
Board Certified, Mohs Fellowship Trained, Dermatologist



# SUPPLIES FOR HOME

## Items for Wound Care

- Ice pack or frozen peas
- Tylenol and Advil
- Vaseline or Aquaphor
- Non-Stick Dressing Pads – If your wound is small, a large band-aid can be used as long as the white non-stick pad covers the entire wound.
- Roll of Medical Tape, Paper Tape, or Silk Tape
- Cotton Balls
- Cotton Swabs
- Optional: Hydrogen Peroxide



Having medical supplies at home will help prepare you for wound care.

# ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

## Dr. Storey Suggests the Following to Enhance Your Healing

- Go home and take it easy for at least 24 hours.
- You may bathe or shower anytime as long as the bandage stays dry for the first 48 hours. Avoid direct water pressure on the bandage or surgical site at all times. You may let gentle water run on the surgical site to remove dry crust or residual dry blood UNLESS you have a skin graft
- Sleep with the surgery site elevated.
- Avoid exercise or heavy lifting until your stitches are removed. This elevates your heart rate and can increase the risk of bleeding.
- If the surgery was on your head, avoid bending over so blood rushes to your head. Use your knees to bend, and keep your head up.
- If the surgery was on your face, do not wear makeup until your stitches are removed.

Smoking impairs the body's ability to heal. Smoking will increase your risk for infection and excessive scarring. **STOP SMOKING** one week before and for two weeks after surgery.



# SURGICAL WOUND

## Your Surgical Wound and Bandage

After your surgery was performed today, your wound was closed using the method(s) marked below.

- ☐ **Stitches or staples.** Come back to have them removed on \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Steri-strips.** Do not touch your steri-strips except to cut off loose ends. They should fall off on their own.
- ☐ **Internal stitches** which will dissolve in 4 to 8 weeks
- ☐ **Skin Graft.** Your wound is open and covered. Do NOT touch the bandage. Do not let your bandage get wet. Come back to have your wound checked and dressing changed on \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **PuraPly.** This synthetic skin graft is engineered in a lab and covered with a waterproof bandage. Leave bandage on for 5 days. Then, remove waterproof bandage, clean gently with soap and water and cover with Vaseline or Aquaphor. You do not need to put a bandage on the wound.

There are several types of dressings used to close surgical wounds. All of them share the same purpose including:

- Maintain a moist environment
- Protect from injury and contamination
- Control bleeding
- Decrease chances of an infection

# MEDICATIONS

## Most Patients DO NOT Need Prescription Medication After Surgery

### Medication for Infection

☐ No, you have not been prescribed an antibiotic.

☐ Yes, you have been prescribed an antibiotic.

Name of antibiotic: \_\_\_\_\_

### Medication for Pain

☐ No, you have not been prescribed pain medication.

☐ Yes, you have been prescribed pain medication.

Name of medication: \_\_\_\_\_

## How to Manage Pain



The worst pain is generally encountered about **4 hours after the surgery**. Use an ice pack or frozen peas for 10 minutes every hour for pain.

- If the pain is not manageable, take 1 Tylenol.
- After 2 hours, if you still have pain, take 1 Advil.

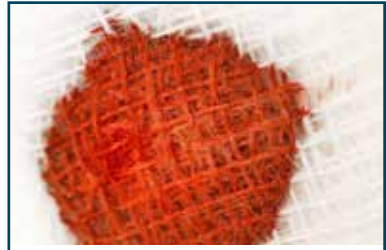
Note: You must ensure that your regular medications do not interact with either Tylenol or Advil.

# AFTER SURGERY

## Bleeding at the Surgical Site is Common After Surgery

If the bleeding soaks through your dressing and **blood is dripping**, do the following:

1. Remove the bandage.
2. Sit up or lie down.
3. Apply **firm continuous pressure** with gauze pads for a **full 20 minutes**. Set a timer for the 20 minutes and do not lift the gauze to check on it!
4. If there is still oozing, **repeat** for another 20 minutes.
5. Do not lift the gauze to check on it!



Please contact our office if the **bleeding does not stop after 40 minutes of continuous pressure**. If it is after hours, the answering service will connect you to the on-call provider.

**559-472-SKIN (7546)**

## Swelling, Bruising, and Numbness are Common After Surgery



- If you had surgery anywhere on your face, forehead, or around the eyes, expect to get a black eye(s).
- Bruising and swelling will get worse before they get better.
- Usually the worst bruising and swelling appear 2 days after surgery, and then they will gradually improve and should resolve completely in 7-14 days.

# AFTER SURGERY

## When to Remove Your Bandage

### ☐ **48 hours for a Pressure Bandage**

This bulky bandage acts as a pressure dressing to prevent bleeding. It should be kept dry and intact for 48 hours. If it becomes wet or soiled before this, you may change the bandage earlier.

If you experience swelling or bruising, apply an ice pack or a bag of frozen vegetables to the area around your surgery site.

Please keep the bandage dry.

Review the wound care instructions on the next page for details.



### ☐ **Do Not Remove Skin Graft Bandage**

Do not touch the bandage placed on the skin graft at the time of surgery.

It should be kept dry and intact until you return to the office in one week for a dressing change and post-op check.

See the skin graft handout for more info.

# WOUND CARE

## Change Your Bandage Every Day

You will need to change your dressing every day during healing. The time to heal depends on the size, depth and location of the wound. Your surgical wound will heal from the inside out and from the outside edges inward.

You may think it's a good idea to leave a wound open to air out and scab over but this is a myth. Drying out will impair healing and increase scar formation.

## How to Care for Your Wound

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Remove bandage and gently clean wound with cotton balls or Q-tips moistened using soap and water.
3. Blot the wound dry with clean gauze or cotton balls. If you experience a great deal of crusting, use hydrogen peroxide to clean. It will bubble up and loosen the crusted tissue. Switch back to soap and water after 1 to 2 days.
4. Once clean, apply a generous amount of Vaseline or Aquaphor to the wound with a clean Q-tip.
5. Some people experience an allergic reaction or irritation to the adhesive in the bandage. To prevent this from happening, leave the adhesive off a few hours a day.
6. Cover wound with a non-stick dressing pad or bandage cut to size.



# WOUND CARE

7. If your wound is draining or oozing, add gauze on top as a second layer and secure with tape.
8. Do not let the wound dry out and "scab over." It heals faster and better when it stays moist with ointment and a dressing.
9. Repeat the process daily until the wound is completely healed.

The time to heal depends on the size, depth and location of the wound. Your surgical wound will heal from the inside out and from the outside edges inward.

## Signs of Infection

Drainage and discharge are expected during the healing process and can be bloody, yellowish, or watery. Signs of infection include increased pain, swelling, redness, warmth, and excessive or foul-smelling drainage starting several days after surgery.

Please contact our office if you experience signs of infection. If it is after hours, the answering service will connect you to the on-call provider.

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# SITE-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

## Lip Surgery

- Follow a soft food diet or cut your food into small pieces for the first week after surgery.
- Avoid large bites of food which can stretch or pull at the sutured area.
- Avoid excessive talking, smiling, and laughing.
- Use a small children's toothbrush to brush teeth.
- Keep lips well lubricated with Vaseline or Aquaphor.

## Forehead, Cheek or Eyelid Surgery

- Be aware that significant eyelid swelling, bruising, or a black eye can result and is expected in these areas.
- Use ice or frozen peas to reduce swelling.

## Ear Surgery

- Wash gently with soap and water.
- Apply a wet compress of a vinegar solution to reduce the chance of infection.
  - Soak a gauze pad in a mixture of equal parts white vinegar and tap water.
  - Lay the gauze on the wound for 10 minutes.
  - Blot dry with clean gauze, apply Vaseline or Aquaphor and a fresh dressing.
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# SITE-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

## Nose Surgery

- Avoid forceful nose-blowing. Use Q-tips if necessary.
- If you have to sneeze, apply firm pressure to your bandage to support the sutured area.

## Extremity Surgery

- Elevate the area as much as possible above your heart when you're resting.

## Sun Protection & Scar Therapy

- You must use sun protection when you no longer need a bandage on your wound.
- Sun protection can reduce this discoloration and help the scar fade faster. Generally, a scar needs 12 full months to heal completely.
- We have various high-quality sun screen products and a scar therapy treatment to aid in your healing process.

Shop Online at [www.ValleySkinInstitute.com](http://www.ValleySkinInstitute.com)



Valley Skin Institute is the home of Dr. Leslie Storey, Board Certified Dermatologist who specializes in Mohs Surgery for the removal of skin cancer.



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