



POST-OPERATIVE WOUND MANAGEMENT

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Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery

Call our office promptly if:

- √ The area becomes very red, develops pus drainage, or becomes warm to the touch
- √ The area suddenly swells, becomes very painful, or develops dark purple color

Care of the Surgical Site

- √ The main goal of postoperative care is to keep the surgical incisions moist with an emollient (Vaseline) and prevent drying or crust formation. The following instructions tell you how to do this.
- √ If any bleeding occurs, apply firm pressure for 5-10 minutes.
- √ Unless specifically instructed, any dressing can come off two days after surgery. Thereafter, any bandage is optional and can be used for camouflage if going out in public, or to catch any remaining blood droplets. Occasionally (e.g. for a skin graft), a pressure dressing will remain in place until your first follow up visit.
- √ Do not get area wet in the shower for 4 days. Simply clean with water and apply antibiotic ointment or vaseline with cotton-tips 4-5 times a day for 7 days. Do not allow the incision to dry out in between applications of ointment. If you are using antibiotic ointment, after 7 days, you may switch to a non-antibiotic ointment like Vaseline.
- √ If there was no pressure dressing on the wound, after 4 days you may allow soap and water to run over the incisions while showering, but do not allow a direct spray of water or immersion in a tub to occur.
- √ Do not allow drying or crust formation. Keep the site moist with the above procedure.
- √ Do not wear make-up until sutures are removed or a new, thin layer of skin covers the area (usually 7-10 days)

The wound will initially be swollen and red. This will fade over the next 2-4 weeks. It is

important to keep the wound protected from sunlight or wear sunscreen when outdoors to prevent pigmentation of the scar.

At the two week mark after your surgery, you may begin using silicone therapy on your scar in an attempt to improve its ultimate appearance.
Silicone has been shown to improve a scar's appearance when used for 2-3 months. It can be applied to a scar in one of two ways; gel or sheeting.
Silicone sheeting is slightly more effective than silicone gel, but can be unsightly and difficult to apply to contoured or mobile surfaces such as the nose or lip. It is available over the counter.
Silicone gel is applied much in the same way as the Vaseline was to your incision. It does not absorb into the skin and therefore does not need to be applied as frequently (usually twice a day). There are many companies that make silicone gel, and all should work equally well. One caveat is to use pure silicone gel, without additives (e.g. onion skin extract). If your scar is on an area of heavy pores (e.g. The lower half of your nose), silicone gel can block the pores and cause buildup.
Remember that your scar will take six months to mature, and will go through an inflammatory phase before it begins to remodel. This means that it will develop redness around the incision, and will also feel firm to the touch. These will decrease as you near the six month mark.
Occasionally, a scar will require a steroid injection to help soften the scar, dermabrasion to help the scar blend in, or even a minor revision surgery. Your surgeon will discuss these options with you if needed during the healing process.
Remember, wound healing takes time and your body does amazing things. Be patient!