



Heartland Dermatology

& Skin Cancer P.C.
12327 Stratford Drive
Clive, IA 50325

voice 515.224.7088
facsimile 515.224.9228

Ava R. Feldman D.O.
Vincent L. Angeloni M.D.
Marie Kresse P.A.-C

Diseases of the Skin
Phototherapy
Mohs Micrographic Surgery for
difficult or recurrent skin cancers
Laser Surgery
Sclerotherapy
Collagen
Botox
Liposculpture

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How to care for your wound.

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Supplies you will need:

- hydrogen peroxide
- q tips
- non stick dressing
- antibiotic ointment or vaseline

In order to assure proper healing of your wound, we recommend the following wound care measures.

For Sutured (stitched) wounds:

- 1) The wound must be kept dry for the first 24 hours after the surgery. After 24 hours you may shower or bathe and may get the wound wet. A dressing change after the wound is wet is recommended. Dressing changes are recommended at least once a day.
- 2) Remove the old bandage and gently clean off any crusted material using a q-tip which has been soaked in hydrogen peroxide. If there is a thick crust, you may need to apply peroxide and allow it to soak the crust for 5 minutes in order to soften the adherent material. The crust should then be gently removed with the q-tip.
- 3) Dry the area with a dry q-tip and then apply and antibacterial ointment or vaseline to the sutured area. Antibiotic containing ointments in theory offer the benefit of killing bacteria, however, you can develop allergic reactions to the antibiotic in these preparations. See the "Common Problems with Wounds" section at the end of this handout.
- 4) Cover the area with a bandaid (if you can get a size that fits). If the wound is too large for standard bandaids, then you might need to purchase some Telfa non-stick dressings from the Drug store. These can be cut to the size of your wound with clean scissors and applied with tape.
- 5) We usually recommend keeping the wound covered until the sutures are removed.
- 6) Watch for any signs of infection, or allergic reactions to antibacterial ointments. Please call the office if you notice any of these problems.

For open wounds (shave biopsy or other wound which is not sutured or stitched):

- 1) Generally you need not worry about keeping the open wound dry for 24 hours like you do with stitches. Showering and bathing is OK, just change the bandage afterwards.



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- 2) Remove the old bandage daily and clean with hydrogen peroxide. Use a peroxide soaked q-tip to gently clean the area and remove any adherent crusted material. Leaving the bandaid off in the shower can also be an easy way to soften and remove any crusts.
- 3) Dry the area with a dry q-tip and then apply vaseline or an antibacterial ointment
- 4) Apply a bandaid to the wound. This is probably even more important for open wounds than for those with sutures. In order to have optimal quick healing, the wound should be kept covered, free of crusts or scabs, and moist with an ointment. When this type of wound heals, the top layer of skin cells must heal in from the sides and meet in the middle. This process occurs much more quickly if the wound is kept covered and moist. If you allow a scab to form, the skin cells must digest their way underneath the scab which makes wound healing take *twice* as long and may result in a slightly depressed scar.

For scalp wounds:

Treat scalp wounds as outlined above with the following differences. If peroxide is allowed to remain in contact with dark hair for long periods, it may result in lightening of the hair color in the area. If this is a concern, you can clean your scalp wound in the shower using soap and water. In many cases, you won't be able to apply a bandage because of the hair, so you can just put a thin coating of ointment on the wound to keep it moist.

Common problems with wounds

Allergic Reactions to topical antibiotics. The antibacterial ointment serves the purpose of keeping the wound moist and avoids the formation of crusts and scabs. Certain antibiotics ointments cause an allergic reaction which is characterized by increasing redness and itching in the area where the ointment has been applied. This type of reaction is most commonly seen with Neomycin which is contained in Neosporin®, and many generic triple antibiotic ointments. Such allergic reactions may also occur with Bacitracin ointment. You can substitute plain vaseline for the antibiotic ointments in order to avoid such allergic reactions. This seems to work just as well as the antibiotic ointments and wounds treated with vaseline do not appear to have any increased risk for infection.

Irritation from tape. Medical tape can be used to secure nonstick dressings. In some cases these tapes can cause allergic reactions or can detach the top layers of skin when removed. This usually causes redness and irritation where the tape sticks to the skin, but not over the wound itself. You can use paper tape which is gentler on the skin. Over-the-counter cortisone cream can help soothe these reactions.

Wound Infection. When wounds become infected, one can see increasing redness surrounding the area, increased pain in the area, and some-



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times pus. In some cases you may see a red streak traveling away from the the wound. If you suspect your wound is infected please call our office as soon as possible. It is normal for all wounds to be somewhat tender the first few days and slightly red. The pain should decrease in a linear fashion over time. Increasing pain several days after the procedure may indicate the onset of infection.

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