

Dermatology Consultants at Newton-Wellesley, PC

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SKIN SURGERY POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

DISCOMFORT

There is usually minimal pain during the first 2-3 days following minor surgery. For mild to moderate pain, take plain or extra-strength Tylenol, 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hours. For more severe pain, please call the office. Rarely, a stronger pain medication is necessary and can be prescribed, but we like to monitor the situation closely to be sure the pain is not an indication of a developing infection.

During the 2 days after surgery, some pain medications can cause bleeding or increased bruising. If possible, avoid aspirin and all aspirin-containing medications as well as ibuprofen (e.g. Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve) and other NSAIDs.

If you normally take aspirin, Coumadin, or Plavix as blood thinners for a heart condition or stroke prevention, they should be continued without interruption or change in dose.

WOUND CARE

We will cover the site when possible with a waterproof bandage which can be left in place for 24-48 hours and will generally stay dry through a brief shower. After 24-48 hours, change the dressing by removing the bandage and cleansing the area gently with plain or soapy water. Pat dry and apply a small amount of Vaseline petroleum jelly (or Aquaphor, both of which are available without prescription) along the line of stitches and cover with either a Band-Aid or gauze and tape. Repeat this dressing change every 1-2 days until sutures are removed. If the adhesive tape irritates your skin, after the first three days you may stop wearing the dressing, but continue to apply Vaseline several times a day. If the gauze dressing becomes stuck to the site because of dried blood, soak the gauze with a washcloth and warm tap water for 3-5 minutes then gently peel away the gauze dressing by adding water beneath the gauze if necessary to further loosen it. Minor new bleeding may occur and can be stopped by applying gentle pressure with fresh gauze for 10-15 minutes. Then apply Vaseline and a new Band-Aid or dressing.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

For the first two days after surgery, avoid vigorous activity, heavy lifting, and alcoholic beverages because these can cause bleeding. For at least the first 2 weeks, any activity that places a lot of stress on the wound can cause it to reopen, so avoid any activity that causes the area to feel as though the stitches are being stretched.

BLEEDING

Staining of the gauze is normal, especially within the first 24-48 hours. Leakage of blood from the dressing is treated by removing the dressing and applying steady pressure with fresh gauze for 15-20 minutes. Repeat for an additional 15-20 min if necessary. If the oozing does not stop after repeating this maneuver, please call the office, (617) 969-0210. If we are not in the office, follow the voice instructions for contacting us. Again if you normally take aspirin, Coumadin, or Plavix as blood thinners for a heart condition or stroke prevention, they should be continued without interruption or change in dose.

INFECTION

We routinely have people use Vaseline rather than antibiotic ointments such as Bacitracin and Neosporin because studies show the infection rates are the same and because allergic reactions to Bacitracin and Neosporin are quite common. Signs of infection include increasing pain, increasing redness, swelling, pus, and possibly fever. If you think you are developing an infection, please call the office.

SUTURE REMOVAL and PATHOLOGY RESULTS

Sutures are normally removed after one or two weeks depending on the site. Pathology results are generally available within 3-5 business days. We will review the pathology results with you when you return to the office for suture removal, although if time permits we often try to call patients when results become available. If you are not returning to the office for suture removal, or if you would like your pathology report sooner, you may call the office 3-5 days after the procedure, and the assistant will be happy to speak with you regarding your report, which will have been reviewed by the doctor.

WHEN TO CALL US

Call the office immediately if you think you are having an allergic reaction to the local anesthetic (call 911 if it is life-threatening), if bleeding/oozing continues after 45 minutes of steady pressure to the wound, if you think you are developing an infection, or if you are experiencing severe pain.

Call the office during business hours if pain persists longer than 3 days or if you have concerns about the healing process.