

Scar Revision / Suture Care Post-Operative Instructions

What supplies do I need to buy before surgery?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vaseline® | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrogen peroxide (3% solution) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-adherent (non-stick) gauze pads | <input type="checkbox"/> Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bandage tape | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice packs (you can make some at home) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton swabs (Q-tips®) | |

How should I prepare for surgery?

- Stop smoking cigarettes at least 6 weeks before surgery.
- Stop chewing tobacco at least 4 weeks before surgery.
- Don't drink any alcohol 24 hours before surgery.

What are my instructions after surgery?

General rules

- If you get IV anesthesia (medication that makes you numb and sleepy), have someone drive you home after surgery and help you at home for 1 day.
- Get lots of rest.
- If you are exercising less after surgery, this may lead to **constipation** (not being able to have a bowel movement, or having hard, dry poop). To help with this, you may want to eat more raw fruit and drink more fluids.
- Even if you're not taking pain medication, don't drink alcohol for 3 weeks after surgery as it causes fluid to build-up in your body.
- Do not smoke. Smoking slows down healing and increases your risk of complications after surgery.

Medications

- You may only need to take Tylenol® (acetaminophen) for your pain for the first day or two after surgery. Please follow the directions on your bottle. Do not drink alcohol while taking Tylenol® (acetaminophen).
- If your doctor prescribes a **narcotic or opioid pain medication** (strong medications to help with severe pain), take as prescribed with food to avoid getting an upset stomach.
 - Also, make sure that you do not take it the same time as Tylenol® (acetaminophen), because most narcotics also have acetaminophen in them. It is important that you do not take more than 3 grams (3,000mg) of acetaminophen in 24 hours. Patients with liver disease should not take more than 2 grams (2,000mg) of acetaminophen in 24 hours.
 - Do not drink alcohol, use machinery, or drive a car while taking narcotic or opioid pain medications.
- Do not take aspirin, or any products that have aspirin in them, unless your doctor says it's okay.
- If you are taking vitamins, start taking them again as long as they don't cause uncomfortable symptoms.

What should my activity level be?

- Start walking as soon as possible after surgery. This helps reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots, pneumonia, and constipation.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking any prescribed pain medications (narcotics/opioids).
- In general, it is okay to go back to work in 2-7 days. Please follow any instructions that your doctor has given you.
- Avoid these activities for **1 week** after surgery:
 - Lifting heavy objects (objects that weigh more than 10 pounds)

- Bending at the waist
- Avoid activities that raise your blood pressure and cause your body to overheat, like sports, for **14 days**.
- Avoid swimming and going into hot tubs and saunas for **3 weeks**.

What should I do when I get home from surgery?

- For the first 2 nights after surgery, keep your head up higher than the rest of your body while you sleep. You can sleep with 2-3 pillows or sleep in a recliner chair.
- Use ice packs around your **incision** (the place where the doctor cut during your surgery) during the first 48 hours after surgery to decrease swelling. Please refer to the “How Do I Make an Ice Pack?” handout (available online: www.med.umich.edu/1libr/OTO/IcePacks.pdf).
- Take off your bandage 24 hours after surgery, unless the doctor gives you different instructions.
 - If your doctor gave you Detachol® (a tape remover), put it on the bandage tape. Let it soak for 2-3 minutes, and then peel the tape off like a Band-Aid®.
- You may shower 24 hours after surgery.
 - It’s okay if your incisions get wet in the shower, but don’t let the shower water run constantly or directly on the incisions.
 - When you shower, only use warm water.
- Clean the incisions with half hydrogen peroxide and half water 3 times a day for 3 days. Then switch to cleaning the incisions with soap and water 3 times a day.
 - Remember to wash your hands well before you do any wound care.
 - After each cleaning, put Vaseline® on the incisions to help soften any crusts that form for 6 days.

- When you're at home, don't cover your incisions with bandages. When you go out, cover your incisions with non-adherent (non-stick) gauze and bandage tape.

What follow-up care will I receive?

- If you have sutures that do not dissolve, the doctor or medical staff will remove them in 5-10 days.
 - Dissolvable sutures can take from 10 days to 3 weeks to completely dissolve.
- Your doctor will let you know if you need to schedule any follow-up visits.

What other changes will I need to make?

- Don't shave the skin where you had surgery for 3 weeks after your surgery.
- Do not use any essential oils on the area of your surgery for 3 weeks after your surgery.
- 3 weeks after your surgery, you may use makeup and sunblock as long as the incision is totally closed, healed, and pink.
- Keep your scars out of the sun for at least 12 months. Always use a strong sunblock (SPF 50 or more) if you can't avoid the sun.
- Follow scar-reducing treatment instructions 3 weeks after your surgery, if your doctor says it's okay.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if you notice any of the symptoms below:

- Increased swelling or bruising
- Swelling and redness that gets worse and lasts for a few days
- Increased redness by the incisions
- Severe or increased pain that is not helped by medication

- Any side effects to medications including rash, nausea, headache, vomiting, or diarrhea
- An oral (mouth) temperature over 101°F
- Yellowish or greenish liquid coming from the incision
- A bad smell coming from the incision
- Bleeding from the incisions that you can't control with light pressure
- Loss of feeling or motion

If you have dangerous or life-threatening bleeding, you should call 911 or go to the Emergency Department.

Who should I call if I have questions?

On Monday - Friday, 9:00am - 5:00pm:

- If you are a patient of Dr. Brenner, Dr. Joseph, or Dr. Moyer, call (734) 431-7634, press option 1 and ask for the facial plastic team nurse.
- If you are a patient of Dr. Stucken, call (734) 998-6082 and ask for the team 5 nurse.
- If you are a patient of Dr. Kim or Dr. Rudy, call (734) 615-8838 and ask for the team 4 nurse.

After hours or on weekends:

- Call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the ENT doctor on call.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by University of Michigan (U-M) Health for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by U-M Health and for which U-M Health does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Authors: Lily Wu, RN, Shannon Rudy, MD
 Edited by: Karelyn Munro, BA, Brittany Batell, MPH MSW

Patient Education by [U-M Health](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](#). Last Revised 03/2023