

DERMATOLOGIST MEDICAL GROUP OF NORTH COUNTY, INC.

CARE OF YOUR SURGICAL INCISION AFTER THE DRESSING CHANGE

- 1) **Apply an icepack** to the incision for 15 minutes 4 times a day from 24-48 hours after the surgery.
- 2) **Avoid all physical activity** for 48 hours after surgery. After 48 hours mild aerobics such as walking, bicycling or elliptical runner can be started if the incision is not painful, bleeding or red. A **sports bra** is strongly recommended during exercise for women who have had surgery on the chest or breast area.

Exercise including swimming is not recommended until after suture removal if surgery has been on the arms or legs or if the incision feels very tight on any area including the chest or back.

3) **Washing:**

A: If there is only paper tape over the incision the area can be gently washed starting 48 hours after the surgery. This can be in a sink or in a bath or shower. Water on the tape should be allowed to evaporate. Avoid swimming in the ocean or soaking in a hot tub until after suture removal. Gentle pool swimming can be done at 48 hours if it does not stretch the incision and the incision is not on the legs. Ask the nurse if swimming is appropriate for your incision.

Tape only needs to be changed if it is falling off by itself. To replace the tape clean the area with soap and water, pat dry and then apply a small amount of antibiotic ointment over the incision. Apply tape along the length of the incision so it sticks on both sides of the antibiotic ointment.

B: If there is a gauze pad or bandaid over all or part of the incision the dressing needs to be changed only if it gets wet from washing or perspiration or if it is wet from wound secretions (which may be clear, pale yellow or blood tinged). If the dressing gets wet remove it, clean the site with soap and water, apply antibiotic ointment to the incision then cover the ointment with gauze and tape or an appropriately sized bandaid. **If oozing from the incision is increasing, call the office.**

Exceptions: Skin grafts should be kept **dry** until after the time of suture removal.

Scalp incisions do not need bandages or tape after the initial dressing change if there is no active bleeding. Gentle shampooing using lukewarm water can be done as often as daily followed by application of antibiotic ointment.

- 4) **If the excision was on an arm or leg** keep an **ace wrap** or wear **pressure stockings/hose** on the incision until after suture removal. If there is swelling of hands or feet remove the wrap, elevate the arm or leg and reapply wrap once swelling has gone down. Stockings and wraps may be taken off at night when you are lying in bed.

Call the office if there is increasing swelling around the incision, pain, tenderness or bleeding. It is normal for bruising to increase over the first 48 hours sometimes giving black eyes if surgery was on the forehead, nose or eyelid and on the lower cheek/jowl, neck and collar bone if surgery was on the cheek or lip.

(over)

Resume coumadin, aspirin and/or Plavix the day of the 24 hour dressing change unless instructed to do otherwise by the practitioner or nurse or unless another surgery is scheduled that requires that you be off these medications prior to the next surgery.

After sutures are removed scarring can be minimized by wearing tape longitudinally along the incision for up to 3 months. This tape may be put on by our nurse at the suture removal visit and need only be replaced by you when it falls off. All activities except contact sports are permitted after sutures are removed unless you are told otherwise by the practitioner or nurse. Full contact sports are permitted one month after surgery.

Tenderness and firmness of the incision site will frequently occur about **one month** after the procedure. This is caused by fibrosis (scar tissue) under the surface of the skin putting pressure on nerve endings. The firmness and tenderness can be improved by massaging the area for 30 seconds twice a day starting at this one month period. Sheeting such as *Curad Scar Therapy* or *Neosporin Scar Solution* can also reduce scarring as can petroleum jelly or *Mederma*. However none of these products is superior to paper tape left in place as much as possible for the three month period. If the area gets irritated the tape or sheeting can be left off for a few days at a time and the area covered with petroleum jelly in the evening and sunscreen during the day. Tape, sheeting and sunscreen will also reduce the chance of darkening of the scar by protecting the area from ultraviolet light.

We usually want to see how the incision is healing 4-6 weeks after the surgery.

Your appointment for that visit will be _____ with _____.