



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 48-72 hours after the surgery.
2. You may resume Coumadin, Aspirin, Plavix or any other discontinued medications 24 hours after the surgery, unless instructed otherwise by the practitioner or nurse and the time of dressing change.
3. 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 swollen, painful, bleeding or red. A sports bra is strongly recommended during exercise for women who have had surgery on the chest or breast area. Swimming is not recommended until after sutures are removed.
4. Washing:
  - A. The area can be gently washed starting 48 hours after the surgery. Clean the area with soap and water, pat dry or blow dry (with a hair dryer) on cool, once dry apply a small amount of antibiotic ointment on top of the tape. You may replace the tape if it gets soiled, sweaty or comes off.
  - B. Exceptions: Skin grafts should be kept dry until after the sutures are removed. 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 daily, followed by application of antibiotic ointment.
5. If the excision was on an arm or leg, keep an ace wrap on the incision until after the sutures are removed. If there is swelling above or below the ace wrap, remove the ace wrap, elevate the arm or leg and reapply the ace wrap once the swelling has gone down. Ace wraps may be taken off at night when you are lying in bed.
6. Call the office if there is an increase in pain, tenderness, bleeding or swelling around incision. 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. You can also get bruising on the lower cheek/jowl, neck, and collar bone if surgery was on the cheek or lip.
7. After the sutures are removed scarring can be minimized by wearing paper tape along the incision for up to 3 months. This tape has been put on by the nurse at the time of the suture removal and only needs to 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. The firmness or tenderness can be improved by massaging the area for 10 minutes twice a day starting at this one-month period. Tape and sunscreen will also reduce the chance of darkening of the scar by protecting the area from ultraviolet light.