

Surgery Site Care for Melanoma and Skin Patients Surgical Oncology

After surgery, you will have an incision with metal clips (staples), stitches, Steri-Strips™ (small white wound closure strips) or Dermabond® (a liquid skin adhesive). These help your incision close and heal. It is very important that you take good care of the incision.

Supplies Needed

- Soap and water
- Dressing – gauze bandages and medical tape
- Bacitracin ointment – available without a prescription at drug and grocery stores

Follow These Guidelines

- Keep the dressing that is covering the incision in place for 48 hours. Your doctor or nurse will give you specific instructions.
- **Do not** remove Steri-Strips or Dermabond until they begin to come off. Steri-Strips take 1 to 2 weeks to come off. Dermabond takes 2 to 3 weeks to come off. If the Steri-Strips do not come off by themselves, they can be removed during your post-op clinic visit.
- Clean your incision once each day with soap and water. Pat the area dry and leave the area open to air as much as possible.
- If the incision becomes sore when wearing clothes, cover the incision with a dressing made from gauze and tape.
- **Do not** use hydrogen peroxide, antibiotic ointment, creams or lotions on the incision unless instructed by your doctor or nurse.
- You may remove your dressing 48 hours after surgery. After removing the dressing, you may shower.
- **Do not** swim, sit in a bath tub or immerse yourself in water until your doctor says it is okay.
- Apply a thin layer of bacitracin over the sutures of your surgical site(s) as instructed. **Do not** use for more than 3 days. Always follow your doctor's instructions.

What to Expect

- A small amount of drainage from the incision is normal. The drainage may range in color from a clear yellow to cranberry. If the incision bleeds and does not stop, apply firm pressure. Call your doctor or nurse.
- You may have some pain and tenderness in and around the incision. Your doctor may give you a prescription for pain medicine. If you do not get a prescription, you may take Extra Strength Tylenol® (acetaminophen).

Precautions

- You may continue normal use of the area affected (arm, leg, etc.) unless told otherwise.
- **Do not:**
 - Exercise until your doctor or nurse tells you that it is okay.
 - Lift objects weighing more than 10 pounds.

Symptoms to report

Check your incision each day for signs and symptoms of infection. Call your doctor **right away** if you notice:

- More drainage with pus from your incision
- More pain or tenderness around the incision
- The skin at the incision site comes apart
- Temperature of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher. Take your temperature once each day, at the same time each day, or if you feel like you may have a fever.
- More redness, swelling or heat around the incision
- A bad smell from the incision

Emergency Center

In case of any emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency center. *For non-emergencies during business hours, call our triage line at 904-202-7300 option 3.*