Caring for Your Incision

Self-care at home

This handout gives instructions on how to care for your incision after your surgery in the Burn/Plastic Surgery Clinic.

Can I get my incision wet?

You can get your incision wet, but do not soak it in water:

- Do not take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming for at least 2 weeks after surgery, or until all open areas or scabs have healed. Ask your doctor if you are not sure if your incision is fully healed.

- Gentle washing is good for your incision. Using a soapy washcloth, please wash it once a day. You can wash it when you are in the shower or at the sink. Use a mild soap without a scent such as Dove Unscented or Unscented Dial.

- After you wash your incision, follow the wound care instructions your doctor gave you.

Should I cover my incision?

- Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, you may remove the outer bandage 2 days after surgery. After that, leave your incision uncovered.

- But, it is OK to cover your incision if:
  - Drainage from it gets your clothes dirty
  - Your clothing rubs against your incision and causes discomfort

- Some incisions should be covered with a bandage. Your doctor will tell you if you need to keep your incision covered.

- Ask your doctor if you have any questions about how to care for your incision.
**Stitches**

There are many different types of stitches. Some types need to be removed, and some dissolve on their own. If your stitches need to be removed, we will set up a clinic visit for you to have them removed.

**When to Call**

Check your incision every day. Call one of the numbers listed below if you have any of these signs of infection:

- Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
- New or worse pain
- New or worse swelling
- Bad smell
- More redness of the skin around your incision
- Cloudy green-yellow drainage from your incision
- New or an increase in drainage or re-opening of a healed incision

**Questions or Concerns**

If you have any questions or concerns about your incision, call the Burn/Plastic Surgery Clinic weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 206.744.5735.

**Urgent Needs**

If you need urgent care after hours or on a weekend or holiday, call the Community Care Line nurse at 206.744.2500.