

**For non-emergent questions and concerns, call (505) 896-2900 during normal business hours  
For emergencies, visit your nearest emergency room or urgent care**

## **How to Care For Your Surgical Wound**

1. A pressure dressing has been applied to reduce bleeding.
  - a. If you do NOT take any blood thinners, this should be left on for 24 hours.
  - b. If you DO take blood thinners, this should be left on for 48 hours.
2. Until this dressing is removed, do not get the dressing wet (avoid showering and bathing).
3. Once the dressing is removed, begin the following wound care ONCE A DAY until healed:
  - a. Remove all bandages
  - b. Combine 1 teaspoon white vinegar and 1 cup water
  - c. Soak a cotton ball or gauze in the solution
  - d. Saturate the wound with this solution for about 2 minutes
  - e. Pat the area dry and avoid vigorous rubbing
  - f. Apply a generous amount of Vaseline
  - g. Cover with a band aid or other bandage
4. Return to the office in \_\_\_\_\_ days for suture removal.
5. To avoid bleeding:
  - a. Avoid activities that would increase your heart rate or blood pressure for the first 48 hours.
  - b. If your surgical site is on your face or scalp, avoid tipping your head below the level of your heart for an extended period of time
6. To allow for proper wound healing and avoid excessing scarring, avoid vigorous physical activity that places strain and tension at your surgical site:
  - a. For 24-48 hours for surgical sites above the neck
  - b. For 2-3 weeks for surgical sites from the neck below
7. Your scar may be very noticeable initially, but with time (usually several months) the pink color will fade and irregularities become smoother. **Make sure to keep the scar out of the sun** (or wear sunscreen), because sun exposure will prolong the redness and can cause darkening.
8. If you experience pain after your procedure, we recommend alternating between 500-1,000mg of Tylenol and 600-800mg of Ibuprofen. You should allow 4-5 hours between taking each medication.
  - a. For example, if you take 1,000mg of Tylenol at 12pm, you should take 600mg of Ibuprofen at 4pm, then 1,000mg of Tylenol at 8pm.
  - b. You should also consistently use ice packs. Place the ice pack directly over the bandage and to the surrounding area for 10 minutes. Repeat every hour.
  - c. Please notify us if you have a contraindication to Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

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### **If you notice bleeding**

1. If your original dressing is on, **leave it in place**
2. Hold firm pressure directly over the site for 20 minutes continuously while elevating that part of your body (for example, if the wound is on your cheek, sit up, do not lie down)
3. **DO NOT** place extra gauze or towels between the bandage and your fingers
4. **DO NOT** release pressure prior to 20 minutes to assess the site
5. After 20 minutes, gently release pressure
6. If there is still bleeding, repeat step 1 thru 5
7. If there is still bleeding after holding pressure for 20 minutes twice, go to your nearest emergency room

### **If you notice swelling**

1. Some swelling after surgery is to be expected.
2. However, if it continues to increase over a few days, is accompanied by increasing pain or redness or drainage, call the clinic (or, if after hours, go to your nearest emergency room).
3. If your surgical site rapidly swells, call the clinic as soon as possible as this may indicate bleeding into the surgical site.

### **If you have had a skin graft or skin flap**

In order for your skin graft or skin flap to survive, it needs good blood supply. While new blood vessels for your skin graft/flap form, avoid anything that may cause friction to the graft/flap site. Friction can disrupt the newly forming blood vessels and prevent the graft/flap from surviving.

#### **DO:**

Keep the skin graft/flap elevated. If your skin graft/flap is on your face, sleep propped-up on 2 pillows. This will also help alleviate pain and swelling.

Expect your graft/flap to be purple to reddish-pink. A skin graft that has turned black may be partially attached or not attached at all. We will be able to determine if your skin graft has survived at your follow up visit.

#### **DON'T:**

**DO NOT RUB, SCRATCH, OR SLEEP ON THE SKIN GRAFT OR FLAP.** This may cause it to detach.

Don't smoke. Smoking causes the blood vessels to constrict, thus limiting the blood supply to your skin graft/flap. If you can't quit, try to cut back.

#### Contact Information:

For non-urgent questions or concerns, please first contact the office at (505) 896-2900.

For concerns after hours that cannot reasonably be addressed when the office next opens, call (281) 766-3183. This phone is NOT HIPPA compliant and although we will try to respond as soon as possible, this is not for emergencies.

For emergencies, go directly to the nearest emergency room or urgent care.