

Caring for Your Wound at Home: Your Healing Guide

Medical-Surgical · Integumentary / Wounds & Skin

Your wound or incision (surgical cut) heals best when you keep it clean and check it each day. These steps help prevent infection and help you spot problems early.

Clean hands first

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after you touch your wound.

Care for your dressing

- Keep it clean and dry.
- Change it the way your nurse showed you, every _____.
- Put no lotion or cream on the wound unless told to.

Shower, do not soak

- Shower only when your surgeon says it is OK: _____.
- Let water run over the wound. Do not scrub. Pat it dry.
- **No baths, hot tubs, or swimming pools until your wound heals.**

Help your body heal

- Eat protein at each meal, such as eggs, milk, meat, fish, or beans. Drink plenty of fluids, unless you have a fluid limit.
- Stop smoking. Smoking slows healing.
- Hold a pillow over a belly or chest wound when you cough.
- Do not lift heavy things until your surgeon says it is OK.

- Staples or stitches come out on: _____.

Know what is normal

- Mild redness and swelling at the edges that get better each day, and a little clear or light pink fluid

Call your provider today if you have

- Redness, warmth, swelling, or pain that spreads or gets worse
- Thick yellow or green fluid (pus) or a bad smell
- Fever of 100.4 F (38 C) or higher
- Wound edges that start to pull apart

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- A wound that bursts open with tissue showing. Lie down with your knees bent. Cover it with a clean, damp towel. Do not push anything back.
- Heavy bleeding that does not stop when you press on it firmly
- Fever with confusion, fast breathing, or feeling faint

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/wound-care-at-home/patient

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