

Sutured Wound Care

Definition

- How to care for a sutured wound
- Stapled wounds are treated the same as sutured wounds
- Skin glue (Dermabond) questions are also covered

Health Information

When Sutures (Stitches) are Needed for Cuts

- Any cut that is split open or gaping needs sutures.
- Cuts longer than ½ inch (12 mm) usually need sutures.
- On the face, cuts longer than ¼ inch (6 mm) usually need to be seen. They usually need closure with sutures or skin glue.
- Any open wound that may need sutures should be seen as soon as possible. Ideally, they should be checked and closed within 6 hours. Reason: To prevent wound infections. There is no cutoff, however, for treating open wounds.

Care Advice

Wound Care for Normal Sutured Wounds

1. **Overview:**
 - Sutures (stitches) are used to keep wounds together during healing.
 - Here is some wound care advice for sutures, staples or Dermabond (skin glue).
2. **Keep the Wound Dry:**
 - Keep sutured wounds completely dry for the first 24 hours. For more serious wounds, keep them dry for 48 hours.
 - If need to clean up during this time, use a sponge bath.
 - After 24 - 48 hours, can take brief showers. Wounds closed with Dermabond skin glue can be showered after 12 hours.
 - Caution: Avoid swimming, baths or soaking the wound until sutures are removed. Reason: may delay healing and increase risk of wound infection.

3. **Wound Dressing Changes:**

- The original dressing (bandage) should be replaced after 24 hours, 48 hours at the latest.
- It may be stuck to the sutured wound with dried drainage. If so, wet the dressing with warm water. After 10 minutes, it should be loose enough to pull off. Be gentle.
- Cleanse the surface of the sutured wound with warm water. Soap is not needed. Dry it.
- Apply an ointment such as Vaseline to the suture line. Reason: to improve healing and prevent a thick scab. Switch to an antibiotic ointment if recommended by your doctor. (Note: mainly done if the wound is at risk for infection).
- **Dermabond wounds.** Skin glue peels off on its own in 5 - 7 days. Caution: Don't apply any ointments or creams to Dermabond. Reason: will cause the skin glue to come off early.
- Cover the wound with a new non-stick dressing.
- How often: Change the dressing once daily. Repeat the above steps.
- Also change the dressing if it becomes wet or dirty.
- A dressing is no longer needed when the edge of the wound is closed and there is no drainage. This takes at least 48 hours. Do continue to apply an ointment to the suture line. Do this twice daily. Reason: protect it from drying and cracking.
- Exception: A dressing is still needed if the wound might get dirty or the sutures catch on clothing.

4. **Pain Medicine:**

- To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.

Suture Removal Questions

1. **Overview:**

- Sutures (stitches) are used to keep wounds together during healing.
- Here is some advice for suture or staple removal.

2. **Suture Removal:**

- Sutures need to be removed within 4-14 days.
- The specific removal date depends on the location and size of the wound. Your doctor will tell you when your child's stitches need to come out.
- Try not to miss your appointment for removing sutures. Reason: will leave skin marks. Sometimes, it can cause scarring. It also makes taking the sutures out harder.

3. **Removal Date - When Sutures (Stitches) Should be Removed:**

- Face: 4-5 days
- Neck: 7 days
- Scalp: 7-10 days (same for staples)
- Chest, stomach, and back: 7-10 days
- Arms and back of hands: 7 days
- Legs and top of feet: 10 days
- Fingers and toes: 10-14 days
- Palms and soles: 12-14 days
- Over a joint: 12-14 days

4. **Suture Out Early:**

- If the sutures come out early, close the wound with tape. You can also use butterfly Band-Aids.
- Do this until the office visit.

5. **Wound Protection After Sutures Are Removed:**

- Protect the wound from injury during the month after taking sutures out.
- Avoid sports that could re-injure the wound. If a sport is essential, cover with tape before playing.
- Allow the scab to fall off on its own. Do not try to pick it off. (Reason: Prevents scarring.)

Call Your Doctor If

- Starts to look infected
- Fever occurs
- Suture comes out early
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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