

Post Minor Procedure Skin and Wound Care:

Here is some good information to help you care for your wound at home after minor skin surgery. Following these instructions will decrease your healing time and will help you obtain the least noticeable scar. For major procedures, please refer to the handout that you received specific to your procedure for more detailed activity and other wound care instructions.

Activity: Rest at home the evening of your surgery. You should not engage in strenuous activity for a few days. This includes activities that may cause stretching of the skin such as yoga or Pilates, physically demanding household chores, aerobic activities that cause straining and heavy breathing, or lifting anything over 15 pounds. Intense exercise may cause your wound to open or may disrupt your stitches. Dr. Holzman will see you in the office 5-10 days after your surgery depending on where the wound is or what type of sutures were used. At that time, he will remove the Steri-strips, and will discuss a timeline for increasing your physical activity.

Wound Care: The area in which you had skin surgery will be sutured closed, and Steri-strips will cover the wound. All of the sutures will be placed under the skin to avoid "railroad track" marks. For the first 3 days, keep the wound clean and dry. If you notice oozing from the wound, you may apply a small gauze dressing, but avoid soaking or scrubbing the wound area. Do not get the area wet, and cover with plastic if showering, or have a sponge bath only. After 72 hours, you may shower and get the Steri-strips wet but do not soak them off. Many patients have Xeroform placed on their incisions. This is a petroleum and bismuth coated yellow gauze that helps control bacterial growth. The Xeroform dressing will come off during your first shower.

Face: Generally patients with facial incisions will be seen back in the office 4-5 days post procedure for Steri-strip and suture removal. After suture removal, cleanse the area with a gentle cleanser such as Cetaphil cleanser, pat dry, and apply Aquaphor twice per day for 3-5 days. On the face, no additional bandage is needed. After that, a medical grade sunscreen should be applied daily. Gently massage the scar for 1-2 minutes 2-3 times daily to help smooth out the scar 6 weeks. In time, the scar will become softer, smoother and flatter, and will begin to fade. This process takes weeks to months to occur.

Trunk and Extremities: Wounds on the trunk and extremities will be seen in the office 10-14 days after the procedure. Occasionally there is a small protruding knot of suture that needs to be removed from the incision. You may shower after 3 days and may get the Steri-strips wet. If they do not fall off after about 7 days, you may remove them. At that time, you may use soap and water to gently clean the wound. Apply Aquaphor twice per day to keep the incision moist for about 5-7 days until no more crusting is noted. At that time, start using a quality moisturizer and scar reducing cream applied to the area with 1-2 minutes of increasingly firm massage 2 times per day.

Bleeding: If you have any excessive bleeding or oozing of the wound, apply gentle, continuous pressure with a dry gauze. Call Dr. Holzman for any bleeding that you cannot stop after 15 minutes of pressure.

Pain Control: Most pain after minor skin surgery can be controlled with over the counter medications. Dr. Holzman recommends that you take Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) 600mg (3 tablets) immediately after your surgery, and again before you go to bed that night. You may then use the Ibuprofen every 8 hours as needed for pain. Try to take the medication with food to avoid stomach upset. If you cannot tolerate Ibuprofen, Tylenol (325mg) may be substituted. Take Tylenol (2 tablets) every 4-6 hours as needed for pain. Do not take Tylenol if you have liver disease. Do not smoke or vape, and avoid alcohol as they affect blood flow to the skin.

Allergies: Some patients develop an itchy, red rash around the wound. This may be due to allergy to adhesive tape, latex, Bacitracin or Neosporin. If you develop an itchy rash, make sure you are using only Aquaphor ointment on the area, and use paper tape and gauze to dress the wound. You may take Benadryl 25mg every 6-8 hours as needed for itching. Please call to arrange an office visit if the itching persists or worsens.

Swelling and Bruising: Bruising and swelling are common, and usually resolve within 1-2 weeks. After surgeries on the face or scalp, bruising, discoloration and swelling are expected and are temporary. Sleep with your head elevated and use ice to reduce swelling. A plastic bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel makes an excellent ice pack. Apply for 10-15 minutes 4-6 times per day for the first 3 days. For surgeries on the lower extremity, swelling and bruising may take over a month to resolve in some cases. Elevating the leg above the heart as much as possible is recommended with the use of ice packs. Persistent swelling impairs wound healing, so elevating the wound is important.

Preventing infection: Infection is uncommon with good wound care. Please call if you develop these symptoms: fever greater than 101°F, increased pain or swelling, increased redness or purulent drainage (pus) from the wound. Washing your hands with soap prior to dressing changes will help prevent infection.

Scarring: There is always scarring from a surgical procedure. Cutting the skin to remove a lesion or tumor or excess skin leaves a scar. Meticulous preparation and suturing by Dr. Holzman helps minimize scar formation. Generally, scars on the face fade more quickly and easily, whereas scars on the legs and torso tend to be noticeable for longer periods of time. This is due to increased movement in those areas that creates tension on the wound. Some people may develop very thick scars called hypertrophic scars that require extra medical care and attention. Over 3-12 months, most scars will shrink in size and will become pink or even white. Sun damage slows wound healing, so avoiding the sun and using a medical grade sunscreen is important.

Moisturizing your skin is important. Dry skin makes you more susceptible to scarring so use cocoa butter, Aquaphor or shea butter to keep your skin soft and supple. In addition, Dr Holzman recommends the use of a topical silicone scar cream for at least 6 weeks to optimize your healing and minimize your scar. As your wound heals, Dr. Holzman will recommend that you gently massage the scar area 1-2 minutes 2-3 times per day. This increases blood circulation to the area and helps soften the scar.

Office Follow Up: Make sure that you have at least one follow up appointment with Dr. Holzman to ensure that you are healing properly. Call the office if you have any questions about wound care.

Follow up appointment:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Notes/Questions: