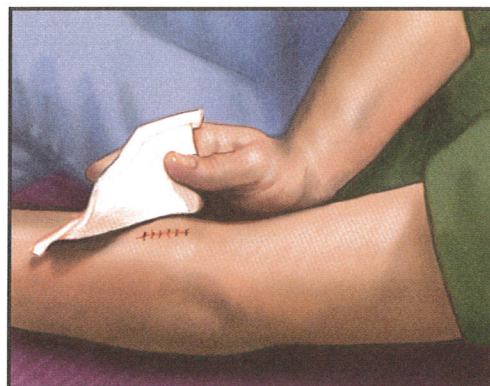


Suture Care

Sutures (stitches) are used to close wounds. Sutures also help stop bleeding and speed healing. Instead of sutures, your wound may have been closed with special strips of tape called Steri-Strips. Treat these the same way you would sutures. To help your wound heal, follow the tips on this handout.

Keep Sutures Clean

- Avoid doing things that could cause dirt or sweat to get on your sutures. If you can't, cover your sutures to protect them.
- Don't pick at scabs. They help protect the wound.
- Don't wash the area around your sutures unless your doctor says it's OK. Then, follow his or her instructions for washing and drying.



When needed, cover your sutures to protect them from dirt and sweat.

Keep Sutures Dry

- Keep your sutures out of water.
- To keep sutures dry when around water, cover them with a plastic bag or plastic wrap. You could also use rubber gloves to protect sutures on a hand.
- If sutures get damp, pat them dry.



A plastic bag can help keep sutures dry.

Changing Your Dressing

Leave the dressing (bandage) in place until you are told to remove it or change it. Change it only as directed, using clean hands.

- After the first ___ hours, change your dressing every ___ hours.
- Change your dressing if it gets wet or soiled.
- Other: _____



Wash hands before changing a dressing.

Other Tips

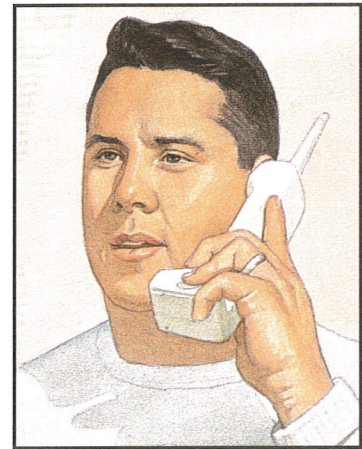
- To help wounds on an arm or leg heal, use the limb as little as possible.
- To help reduce swelling and throbbing, raise the area with sutures above your heart.
- To help prevent itching, cover sutures with gauze. If sutures itch, try not to scratch them.
- For pain relief, try acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Don't use aspirin. It can increase bleeding.
- Some sutures need to be removed by a health care provider. Others dissolve on their own. You'll be told which kind you have.



When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor or health care provider if you notice any of the following signs:

- Increased soreness, pain, or tenderness after 24 hours
- A red streak, increased redness, or puffiness near the wound
- White, yellowish, or bad-smelling discharge from the wound
- Bleeding that can't be stopped by applying pressure
- Steri-Strips fall off or stitches dissolve before the wound heals
- Fever



Special Instructions:

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featuring **KRAMES**