

Caring for your scalp wound

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Introduction

There is no single best way to care for a surgical wound, although research and technology allow us to advise and modify wound care for individual patients. The advice given in this leaflet represents the ideal care for a surgical excision of skin, to provide optimum healing and minimal scarring.

Immediate post operative care

The wound has been dressed with specialist dressings at the time of the operation. For hair bearing scalp, a special spay dressing may be used; on other areas, a plaster may be used. Keep these dressings dry for 24 - 48 hours after the biopsy, as advised. After this time, the scalp wound, hair and wound can be washed.

As scalp wounds may bleed, you are advised to sleep propped up on pillows, and avoid any physical exertion after surgery.

Washing the wound

You should wash the wound as follows:

- Have a normal shower (or bath) allowing the wound to get wet
- Use water to wet any dressings and gently remove them
- Wash off any blood clots around the wound
- Do not scrub the wound
- Use plain water, or, if prescribed, a prescribed cleanser: avoid tcp/dettol or savlon
- Dry the skin gently with clean towel
- Apply plain Vaseline to the wound, or a prescribed ointment
- Dress the wound as directed - see below

Dressing the wound

Once the wound has been washed, it can be dressed again.

A. Ointment dressings

Awkward wounds such as the hair bearing scalp, may simply have an ointment as a dressing. This should be applied several times daily to prevent the wound from drying up. Either use Vaseline or a prescribed ointment. If prescribed, you may be issued with a spray dressing and instructed how to use it.

B. Simple dressings

For non hair bearing scalp, wounds have a simple dressing consisting of a layer of Vaseline or prescribed ointment, then a plaster with an absorbent pad applied on top.

Dr Bashir will tell you how often to change your dressings. In most cases a simple plaster will suffice, unless you have been instructed otherwise.

This process of washing and dressing the wound should be repeated daily until the wound has healed or any stitches have been removed.

Stitch removal

Your wound may have been stitched or stapled closed, glued, or simply left open to heal by itself. Wounds that have been glued or which have dissolving stitches do not need to have anything removed, although you may be booked for a wound check. Most stitched or stapled wounds will require to have the stitches removed and you will be advised when this should be - typically two weeks after scalp procedures.

Bleeding and bruising

The scalp has a rich blood supply, which may lead to bleeding or bruising after your surgery. To help reduce the risk of this, avoid physical exertion. If you do experience bleeding, **press firmly on the wound using a clean towel, an absorbent pad or tissues for 10 minutes.** This will stop bleeding in almost all cases. If you cannot stem a large flow of blood, call for an ambulance by dialling 999, and **continue to apply pressure whilst awaiting help.**