

Caring for your surgical 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. Keep these dressings dry unless advised otherwise. A dressing change will be scheduled, usually 48-72 hours or 7 days after the procedure.

Washing the wound

Once you have been given permission to wash the wound, you may do so as follows:

- Remove the dressing gently: if it's stuck, don't pull it - soak it off with water
- Have a normal shower, allowing the wound to get wet
- Wash off any blood clots around the wound
- Do not scrub the wound
- Use plain water, or a prescribed cleanser: avoid tcp/dettol or savlon
- Dry the skin gently
- 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. *Simple dressings*

Most wounds can be covered with 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.

B. *Ointment dressings*

Awkward wounds such as the scalp, eyelids or genitals may simply have an ointment as a dressing. This should be applied several times daily to prevent the wound from drying up.

C. *Secondary Intention wounds*

Wounds which have not been stitched but are being allowed to heal naturally are known as secondary intention wounds. After washing, Vaseline or a prescribed ointment can be applied directly to the wound. The wound can be dressed with the recommended dressing, usually DuoDerm or Granuflex.

Stitch removal

Your wound may be closed in variety of ways, 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 wounds will require to have the stitches removed and you will be advised when this should be.