Caring for Your Surgical Incision*

Important Things You Can Do at Home to Make Sure Your Incision Heals Well

*An incision is a cut or wound from a surgery



Clean Your Hands

☑ **DO:** Wash your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before touching your dressing or incision. Also, clean under your nails and dry your hands with a clean towel. If unable to use soap and water, you can use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Check And Clean Your Incision

☑ **DO:** Follow your doctor's instructions on when to change or remove your dressing and whether to keep your incision dry after dressing is removed. After your dressing is removed, check your incision every day and, if doctor's instructions allow the incision to get wet, gently clean it with warm water and soap every day.

Care For Yourself

☒ **DO NOT:** Lift anything heavier that your surgeon recommends. Heavy lifting could affect wound healing.

☑ DO

- Use a mild soap to gently clean your incision. Gently rinse soap off completely with warm water.
- Pat your incision dry using a clean and dry towel before putting on clean clothes.
- All your bedding should be clean when you go to sleep after surgery.
- Avoid any activities where you might get dirty or sweaty.

☒ DO NOT

- Do not use hydrogen peroxide or rubbing alcohol to clean your incision.
- Do not share your washcloth or soap with other people.
- Do not soak in the tub. Take showers or sponge baths until your doctor says it is okay to take a bath.
- Do not apply lotions, powders, or oils to the incision or area around it.

If Your Doctor Closed Your Incision With:

Steri-Strips: May be removed after two weeks or until it falls off on its own. No special care needed.



Staples/Sutures: Do not remove your staples. A doctor or nurse will remove them during your follow-up appointment.



Glue: Do not try to remove or alter. No special care needed.

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What to Look for While Your Incision Heals

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Signs That Your Incision Is Healing Normally:

- The edges meet neatly and are close together.
- There may be some itching, soreness, bruising, and/or redness along the incision line. This is part of the normal healing process as your incision heals together.
- There maybe a small amount of blood or clear fluid leaking from the wound for the first few days. This is like the sterile fluid found in blisters which form after any skin injury and is part of the normal healing process.

Examples Of Normal Healing



Your Incision May Be Infected If:

- It feels hot.
- It smells bad or begins to open.
- It leaks a thick white, green, or yellow fluid.
- There is increased pain and swelling at the incision site.
- The redness and swelling spreads or worsens.
- You may or may not have a fever with these symptoms.

When To Notify Us:

Contact Your Surgeon's Office if:

- Your incision opens
- You have the symptoms of infection listed above

Call first and email your surgeon with pictures if possible, through My Doctor Online: https://mydoctor.kaiserpermanente.org/.

☎ During Office Hours_____

☎ After Hours_____

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