

Post-Operative Incision Care - 1

CARING FOR YOUR INCISION

After the removal of the sutures (stitches), you will need to take care of the incision as it heals. Doing so will:

- **Promote healing.**
- **Lower the risk of complications like infection and the incision opening up (dehiscence).**
- **Help you avoid pain or discomfort.**
- **Improve scarring.**

REMOVAL OF SUTURES

All of your sutures above the skin surface have been removed and only the dissolving type of sutures remain below the skin. These do not require removal and will disappear on their own.

The incision is now supported and protected with surgical glue and paper tape called Fixomull. Both will fall off over time as they lose their adhesion.

CLEANING YOUR INCISION

Avoid wetting your incision for the first 48 hours after the removal of your sutures.

It is better to shower than take a bath. Soaking your incision can soften it and may cause it to open up.

You must always be safely seated (chair, stool) in the shower to avoid falls and damage to the operated site and other body parts.

To clean the incision:

- Gently wash over the top of the Fixomull with soap and water.
- Rinse thoroughly.
- Do *not* scrub or soak the incision.
- Do *not* use alcohol or hydrogen peroxide which can harm the tissue and delay healing.
- Gently pat the incision dry with a clean, fresh towel and allow it to air dry completely.

DRESSING YOUR INCISION

Over time the Fixomull will begin to curl and peel. Trim the edges, keeping the tape neat and tidy. As you trim, the tape will decrease in size until only small pieces remain. These should wash off in the shower.

If after 1 week the Fixomull tape remains, gently remove along the line of the incision, not across it. No further dressings are required.

Post-Operative Incision Care - 2

SCAR MASSAGE

Massaging a scar can help:

- **Promote healing**
- **Desensitise scar tissue.**
- **Soften and flatten scar tissue.**
- **Improve the cosmesis of your scar.**

Scar tissue may stick to the underlying muscles, tendons, blood vessels, nerves and bones.

Massage can prevent this from occurring and helps to keep the scar tissue flexible. Scars may feel sensitive, tingle or hurt when touched.

Regular massage can help to control this and eventually sensitivity should ease.

Place the pad of your thumb or finger on the scar. Massage using slow up and down motions so that the skin moves on the underlying scar tissue. Use firm pressure, however, do not damage the skin. It is recommended that you use a non-perfumed moisturising cream (for example Sorbolene, Vitamin E) as this will help moisturise the scar.

When to massage:

- Commence scar massage as soon as your incision is fully healed, once the Fixomull has come off.
- It is recommended that you massage your scar twice a day for 5 minutes each time.
- Continue to massage your scar until it is pale in colour, flat and soft.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Avoid baths, swimming pools, spas and the beach until your incision is completely healed to prevent infections and opening of the incision.
- Don't expose your scar to *direct sun* for 3-6 months. New skin that has formed over the incision is very sensitive to sunlight and will burn easily which may result in bad scarring. Cover with sunscreen.

WHEN TO CONTACT DR ZILKO/YOUR GP?

Call the clinic or your GP if you notice any sign of infection around your incision or experience delayed healing.

Some things to watch out for include:

- Redness or hardening around the incision.
- Increased swelling around the incision.
- Bleeding or increased ooze from the incision (may become thick, yellow, green or tan in colour)
- A bad smell coming from the incision.
- Increased size or depth of the incision.
- Gaps in your incision - these can grow and become serious complications if ignored.
- Fever (> 38 C temperature or shaking/ chills).
- The incision is hot to touch.
- Increasing or unusual pain not relieved with pain relief.