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American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery

Dermatology  
Mohs Micrographic Surgery  
Cosmetic Surgery  
Laser Surgery

### AFTER SURGERY: POST-OPERATIVE CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Keep the dressing dry and do not remove for 24 hours. After 24 hours, you may shower.
- If bleeding starts, keep continuous pressure on area for 20-25 minutes without removing the bandage. Contact the office if bleeding continues.
- Do not take any aspirin or aspirin-containing products (including Advil), until sutures or staples are removed. Take Tylenol or Extra Strength Tylenol for pain relief.
- If the surgical site is on your face or head, sleep with 2 pillows under your head and lay on the unaffected side for the first few nights. This will help to minimize swelling.
- Depending upon the location and nature of your surgery, there may be activity restrictions that will be specific to your case. In general, **do not** attempt any physical exercise until the sutures or staples are removed.
- Change the dressing daily using the following steps:
  - Wash your hands before and after each dressing change.
  - Using Q-tips or sterile gauze, gently clean the wound with hydrogen peroxide for the first three days to remove any crust along the suture line. After three days, mild soap and water may be used during or after the shower. You may pat dry with sterile gauze.
  - **Apply Vaseline, Aquaphor, Bacitracin, or Polysporin ointment** (all of which can be purchased over the counter) to keep the wound moist for better healing. **Do not use Neosporin ointment as a substitute; as it may sometimes cause an allergic reaction.**
  - Cover with sterile gauze or a sterile bandage.
- If your wound becomes red, warm, swollen, painful, or begins to drain, or if you develop a fever of 101° or greater, please call the office.
- If you have any further questions or problems, **call 858-278-8835**. If problems occur after the clinic hours, please call **619-318-0952**.

### THE HEALING PROCESS

During the healing process you will notice a number of changes. During the first week or ten days there will be little apparent progress. All wounds develop a small surrounding halo of redness, which means healing is occurring. Severe itching with extensive redness usually indicates sensitivity to the ointment used to dress the wound or most times a reaction to the bandage tape. You should call the office if this develops. Swelling and/or discoloration around your surgical site are not uncommon, particularly when performed around the eye. All wounds normally drain (the larger the wound the more drainage) which is why you must change the dressings daily. This drainage will lessen after the first week.

After 1 to 2 weeks you will notice the wound beginning to shrink and new skin beginning to grow. This phase of healing will be more rapid. A healed wound has a healthy, shiny look to the surface and is red to dark pink in color. Small wounds may heal in 2 to 3 weeks. Larger wounds may take 4 to 5 weeks. After the wound is healed, you can discontinue daily dressing changes. The wound will remain quite red and slowly fade over the next few weeks or months. Sometimes it takes 6 months to a year to fade completely. You may experience a sensation of tightness as your wound heals; this is normal and will gradually subside. Frequent massage of the healed wound will help to loosen the scar. Frequently, the surgery involves nerves and may take up to a year before feeling returns to normal. Rarely will the area remain numb permanently. Your healed wound may be sensitive to temperature changes (such as cold air). This sensitivity improves with time, however, if you're having a lot of discomfort, avoid extreme temperatures. Patients frequently experience itching after their wounds appear to have healed, because of the continued healing under the skin's surface. Plain petroleum jelly (Vaseline™) will help relieve the itching.

### *Specializing in Cosmetic & Medical Dermatology*

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