

Suture and Steri-Strip Care Instructions

Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

Your provider closed a wound with sutures (also known as stitches) today.

These instructions will help you take care of your non-absorbable stitches (stitches that do not dissolve on their own):

1. Keep the wound area dry for the first 24 hours to reduce risk of infection.
2. After the first 24 hours, the wound can get wet for short periods of time (i.e. in the shower). If you get the wound wet, pat it dry as soon as possible. Do not soak the wound until the sutures have been removed. This means no swimming, baths, etc.
3. Gently wash and dry your wound with soap and water. Do not use hydrogen peroxide, rubbing alcohol, or any other cleansing solution unless instructed to do so by your healthcare provider.
4. Apply a small amount of antibiotic ointment or plain petroleum jelly if instructed to do so by your healthcare provider. This will help prevent infection and keep the wound moist to promote healing. Cover with a clean and dry bandage.
5. After 48 hours, you may choose to leave the sutures uncovered.
6. Don't pick at scabs or dressings. Avoid any activities that put stress in the wound until your healthcare provider tells you it is OK to resume your normal activities.
7. Watch for signs of infection and alert your healthcare provider if you experience any of the following:
 - Increasing redness, tenderness or warmth around the suture site
 - Unusual swelling around the site
 - Appearance of pus or any red streaks
 - Fever
8. Timing of suture removal depends on how the wound is healing and where it is located. You can expect to have your sutures in place based on the following timeline:
 - Face: 3-5 days
 - Scalp or arms: 7-10 days
 - Trunk, legs, hands or feet: 10-14 days
 - Palms or soles: 14-21 days

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Sometimes, your provider may choose to place adhesive bandages called “Steri-Strips” instead of, or in addition to, sutures.

Steri-Strips are pieces of adhesive tape that can be used to help the edges of an incision or cut grow together. They have several advantages, including low rates of infection, speed of application, no need for local anesthesia, and no need for special removal.

Incisions closed with Steri-Strips should be kept dry for 24-48 hours. Afterwards, you may cleanse the area with mild soap and water and pat the area dry.

Steri-Strips begin to curl and peel away from the body, usually within five to seven days after application. It is OK to trim the edges as they begin to lift, but do not pull, tug, or rub them. Steri-Strips should be gently removed after two weeks if they have not already fallen off.