

Daniela Burchhardt, MD

Facial Plastic Surgery

Wound Care Instructions Using Steri-Strips

Your incision has been covered with steri-strips. These are white strips that are glued to the skin around your wound. We use these when dissolvable sutures are hidden underneath the skin for your skin closure. The strips are very easy to take care of because they do not require any cleaning.

Steri-strips are meant to stay on until they fall off on their own. They require no special care, and you can wet them in the shower the day after they are applied. However, do not scrub or rub them or they may fall off too soon. Washing the area around the wound is recommended.

If the edges of the strips curl up, you can trim them flush with the skin using a small pair of scissors. If they fall off prior to your post-op visit, do not be alarmed. Simply wash the wound once a day with soap and water and apply an antibiotic ointment such as Bacitracin or Polysporin ointment 2-3x per day (available over the counter). Leave the incision open to the air as much as possible.

If at any point you feel that the steri-strips look unsightly, you may cover them with a Bandaid when out and about.

How can I manage my pain after surgery?

Any pain is related to swelling and should be minimal. For the first 1-2 days:

- If you had a skin defect repair such as a Mohs defect closure, it is best to NOT ice the flap or graft, ie the areas from which skin was moved to cover the defect. This is because icing constricts the blood supply, which is vital to the graft or flap healing successfully. However, you may ice areas of your face not directly involved in the repair, but which are starting to swell and bruise. For example, the eyelids frequently swell for which icing can help provide comfort. Similarly, a headache can often be soothed by icing the forehead or the bridge of your nose, provided the area was not part of your reconstruction.
- To ice, apply an ice pack over the dressing for 15-20 minutes every 1-2 hours until bedtime on the day of surgery and 1-2 days thereafter. A ziplock bag with frozen peas or corn works well and does not place undue pressure on the face.
- Take Tylenol extra strength (acetaminophen 500 mg), 1 -2 tablets every 6-8 hours as needed, not to exceed 4-6 pills in a 24-hour period, (unless allergic) or unable to take due to medical comorbidities.
- If Tylenol alone is insufficient, you may also take ibuprofen/motrin/naproxen in addition to Tylenol. This type of pain reliever thins your blood and may exacerbate any bleeding and bruising, so try to avoid taking these if you are still bleeding.
- Sleep with your head elevated on pillows.

Should I decrease my activity level?

Activity increases your risk of bleeding and pain by increasing blood flow to the area.

- Decrease activity for the next 24 hours or as directed.
- Avoid all exercise, bending, lifting, aerobic walking, recreational sports, etc. any activity that increases your heart rate increases your risk of problems for 7 days. Leisure activity such as day to day normal activities (ie walking the dog) are perfectly acceptable.

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Should I be concerned if the wound is bleeding?

You may notice a small amount of blood on the dressing for the first few days and this is normal.

However, if bleeding persists, is excessive, or soaks through the bandage:

- 1) Relax and recline
- 2) Apply firm, steady pressure to the wound for 15 minutes straight. Bleeding will generally slow with these measures. If you are on **blood thinners**, it will take longer for bleeding to slow and may require you to hold pressure for longer.
- 3) **If excessive and brisk bleeding continues, call our office. In the rare event that you cannot reach anyone on the list, you may need to go to the nearest emergency room.**

Can I take Arnica to help with any bruising?

Arnica is a homeopathic supplement that helps minimize bruising and swelling. It is available in both pill and cream version over the counter at pharmacies and health food stores. You may apply the cream on any bruised skin to help the bruises fade faster, but do not apply the cream directly over the incision or sutures. If you choose to take the arnica tablets as well, it is best to start taking these as soon as possible after your surgery, as directed on the bottle.

What will the wound look like?

There may be swelling or bruising around the wound. Due to gravity, bruising may occur in the dependent areas of your face or even the neck. If the wound becomes increasingly red or inflamed, warm, tender, drains a creamy fluid, or if you develop fever or chills, please call our office.