

Bandage and Dressing Care

Arnold – Cox Knee & Shoulder Center

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This is a general idea of some of the items to expect regarding wound care following a surgery. If you have been given specific instructions regarding your wound those instructions would supersede any instructions in this packet.

- Clean Daily with Betadine (if allergic to betadine use peroxide)
- Do Not remove Steri-Strips™ they are designed to fall off on their own
- Gauze 4x4's are the bandage of choice as they allow the incision to breathe
- For outpatient knee arthroscopies – after the initial dressing is removed, IF there is no redness or drainage then the portal sites can be covered with Band Aids.
- For outpatient knee and shoulder procedures the joint if filled with sterile fluid for the procedure this will cause fullness and possibly drainage in the first 24 hours
- May leave the incision open to air a few hours each day IF at home and in clean environment
- NO ointments, salves or lotions until the wound has completely healed (4 weeks)
- May shower one week post op if there are no staples AND if there is no redness/drainage from wound
- Showering before one week requires the wound to be covered with plastic wrap
- DO NOT submerge the knee underwater (NO bathtubs/swimming/pools/hot tubs/etc) until cleared by our office.
- Call our office if the wound opens, drains, or if incision line looks red or inflamed
- Call our office if running a fever more than 101° Fahrenheit
- If there are Sutures or Staples arrange to follow up 10-14 days for staple removal

Sling/Immobilizer:

You will receive instructions on your limitations and restrictions as you recover depending on your surgery. Your sling is primarily for comfort. It is important now, however, that you move your elbow, hand and wrist to reduce swelling and prevent stiffness. You may remove the sling and begin gentle range of motion exercises as soon as you are ready; we recommend starting gently the day after surgery. You should not do any pushing, pulling, or lifting with your operative arm. Nothing heavier than a coffee cup should be held in your operative arm until we see you back in clinic unless otherwise stated. It is ok to eat using your operative arm. You should wear your sling for sleeping.

Some Frequent Questions:

How is the wound bandaged?

Immediately after surgery your wound will be covered with sterile bandages. For inpatient cases this will be removed the day after surgery. For outpatient cases you should leave this dressing on for the first 48 hours. The wound will be examined to be sure that it looks as expected while in the hospital. You should keep the wound covered for the first week following the surgery.

How should I care for my wound?

There is very little care that needs to be given to your surgical wound. The most important aspect for the first 72 to 96 hours will be to keep the wound dry and clean. While in the hospital your surgical wound will be assessed each day to be sure that it is progressing and that no signs of infection are present. They will alert you to any concerns that they have about your wound and give you specific instructions regarding your wound care. At home the wound care should be maintained for the first week following your surgery.

Is it normal for the wound to itch?

A few days after your surgery you may notice some itching near your surgical wound. Most people say that is a sign of healing but it may also be a result of the Steri-Strips™ or other tapes that have been used. It is best to avoid scratching the wound. If it becomes too much of a problem, call our office. Some times over the counter medications such as Benadryl can be used to assist with this.

How do I take care of my wound at home?

When you go home from the hospital you should have someone look at your wound on a daily basis. Keep the wound covered for the first week after your surgery. It is normal to have some fullness in your wound/joint after surgery. This is a result of swelling. A hematoma is an accumulation of blood that has occurred during and after your wound was closed. In most cases, your body will absorb this fluid with no additional concern.

If the hematoma is significant and has not begun to resolve after several days, notify our office. Other signs of concern will be redness or drainage from the wound. If the swelling is increasing, the wound becomes red / inflamed or you notice drainage, you should contact our office for additional instructions.

When can I take a shower?

Your surgical team will make a determination about when you can take a shower. However in most cases this will be approximately one week after your surgery as long as there is no redness or drainage. Be sure to ask your surgeon or nurse about the timing of that first shower if there is anything unusual. Baths are discouraged for the first month due to difficulty getting in and out of a bathtub, as well as avoiding soaking the wound in bath water.

Does it take a long time for the wound to heal?

Your wound will be healed within two weeks from your surgery unless there has been some reason to delay that healing. In addition people that have other medical problems such as diabetes, people who need to take daily steroids for other conditions, and those people whose immune system may be compromised, may need additional time for their wounds to completely heal. If you have questions about the time it will take for your wound to heal, discuss this with your surgeon.

Is wound care different for a child?

Children's wounds heal very quickly and normally without problem. Preventing your child from scratching the wound or touching the wound is very important. If the child requires the use of a diaper, an additional measure to protect a surgical wound in that area may be necessary.