Plastic Surgery Incision Care

Your child has had stitches or sutures to keep the skin edges together and to aid in the healing process after plastic surgery. A doctor or nurse will remove the sutures. You will be given a time to return either to the clinic or Same Day Surgery to have the sutures removed. It is important that the sutures are removed at the right time. If sutures are left in too long, infection may develop and the amount of scarring may increase.

There may be slight oozing of pinkish drainage from the incision line for the first 24 hours. This is considered normal.

Report any of the following to your child’s doctor immediately:

- Drainage after 24 hours
- Bright red drainage
- Foul smelling drainage

Discomfort

The amount of pain or discomfort will vary depending on the type of procedure your child had. Usually plain acetaminophen (Tylenol®) can control the pain / discomfort. Be sure to follow the directions on the package for the amount to give based on your child’s age and weight. Do not use ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) or aspirin products. These products can cause thinning of the blood and extra bruising or bleeding. Cool compresses may be used to decrease swelling. Do not use a heating pad on the suture area. Your child’s doctor may prescribe Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) with Codeine or Acetaminophen® with oxycodone for your child’s pain. Be sure to follow the instructions given by the doctor when giving this medication.

Care of the Sutures

It is important that the suture line be clean and free of excess blood or drainage. If your doctor recommends it, you can use a solution of half-strength hydrogen peroxide (a solution made from half water and half hydrogen peroxide) to clean crusty drainage on or around the sutures and to decrease skin irritation in the area. Half-strength hydrogen peroxide is usually only necessary for 1 to 2 days, if drainage is present. After the sutures are cleaned, apply Bacitracin® or Neosporin® ointment to the suture line. This should be done at least 3 times per day to keep the incision moist. If the incision becomes dry, apply ointment as directed. Reactions to these ointments can occur. If the area becomes reddened, bumpy or itchy, stop using the ointment and call your child’s doctor.

If there are steri-strips in place over the sutures, special care is not needed. With normal showering, the strips will loosen and begin to curl up from the edges. These curled edges may be trimmed. Allow the steri-strips to come off by themselves.

If there are staples in place, special care instructions will be given.
An older child may take showers. Sponge bathe small children. Your child should not sit in the bathtub when the sutures are in place (unless the sutures are just on the face). He should not swim while the sutures are in place. This can lead to infection or lead to a longer healing time.

Call your child’s doctor or the Plastic Surgery Nurse Practitioner at ______________________ if:

- Your child has a fever greater than 101°F (38.3°C).
- Your child complains of pain not relieved by pain medication.
- There is increased swelling, drainage or red streaks around the sutures.
- The incision breaks open.
- You have questions or concerns.