Care of Stitches or Staples

Some cuts need stitches or staples to help the skin heal. Stitches and staples help pull the edges of a cut together so it can heal better. Stitches are a special type of thread. Staples are a metal material. After the cut heals, a doctor or nurse will need to take out the stitches or staples. If they are left in too long, they can cause the skin to become infected or can cause more scarring.

When your child had a cut that has been stitched or stapled:

- Keep the cut area and dressing clean and dry until the stitches or staples are removed.
- Gently wash the area with mild soap and water if it becomes dirty. Do not rub. Pat the area dry. Put a clean dressing or Band-Aid® over the cut, if needed.
- Do not let your child go swimming or soak the cut area in bath or dish water until after the stitches or staples have been removed.
- Give pain medication as directed by your doctor: ____________________________ (medication and amount) every _______ hours.

Check your child and the cut area every day for signs of infection:

- Fever greater than 101.5° F (38.6° C)
- Red streaks in the skin around the cut
- Yellow or green thick liquid oozing from the cut
- Increased pain or soreness to the cut area
- Cut area warm or hot to touch
- Swelling in area of cut

Removal of stitches or staples:

- Taking the stitches or staples out on time is important for the cut to heal with less scarring.
- Your child should return to the emergency room or doctor’s office in _______ days to have the stitches or staples removed.

Call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- Your child shows any signs of infection (see above).
- The stitches or staples fall out before his return appointment.
- The cut breaks open and bleeds.
- Your child misses his return appointment.