

Caring for Your Incision

Self-care at home

This handout gives instructions on how to care for your incision after your surgery in the Burn/Plastic Surgery Clinic.

Can I get my incision wet?

You can get your incision wet, but do not soak it in water:

- Do not take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming for at least 2 weeks after surgery, or until all open areas or scabs have healed. Ask your doctor if you are not sure if your incision is fully healed.
- Gentle washing is good for your incision. Using a soapy washcloth, please wash it once a day. You can wash it when you are in the shower or at the sink. Use a mild soap without a scent such as Dove Unscented or Unscented Dial.
- After you wash your incision, follow the wound care instructions your doctor gave you.



Gently wash your incision with a mild, unscented soap.

Should I cover my incision?

- Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, you may remove the outer bandage 2 days after surgery. After that, leave your incision uncovered.
- But, it is OK to cover your incision if:
 - Drainage from it gets your clothes dirty
 - Your clothing rubs against your incision and causes discomfort
- Some incisions should be covered with a bandage. Your doctor will tell you if you need to keep your incision covered.
- Ask your doctor if you have any questions about how to care for your incision.

Stitches

There are many different types of stitches. Some types need to be removed, and some dissolve on their own. If your stitches need to be removed, we will set up a clinic visit for you to have them removed.

When to Call

Check your incision every day. Call one of the numbers listed below if you have any of these signs of infection:

- Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
- New or worse pain
- New or worse swelling
- Bad smell
- More redness of the skin around your incision
- Cloudy green-yellow drainage from your incision
- New or an increase in drainage or re-opening of a healed incision

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about your incision, call the Burn/Plastic Surgery Clinic weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 206.744.5735.

Urgent Needs

If you need urgent care after hours or on a weekend or holiday, call the Community Care Line nurse at 206.744.2500.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call the Burn/Plastic Surgery Clinic: 206.744.5735

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call the Community Care Line nurse: 206.744.2500