

INCISION AND SUTURE LINE CARE

Incisions and suture lines are a necessary part of surgery. These lines take many months to fully heal. Part of the healing process requires proper cleansing and care. In addition, there are treatments that can help resulting scars to be flatter, finer and less noticeable. There is no guarantee to what a scar will look like once it has fully healed, however the following instructions are important to good outcomes.

Do not smoke

You have been advised to quit smoking before surgery for your safety. Do not begin smoking after surgery. This can reduce the oxygen in your blood and greatly impact your ability to heal. While it is advised for your overall health that you quit smoking entirely, it is imperative that you do not smoke whatsoever until your incisions have fully healed.

Following surgery

In the days immediately following surgery you will be given instructions on showering, bathing and applying anti-biotic ointment to your incision and suture lines. Do not swim in any lake, ocean, swimming pool or other water until 5 days *after* your incision lines have fully sealed and any sutures are removed.

Initial healing

Once your incision lines have sealed, you may wish to apply a skin moisturizer to the suture line. This aids in softening the scar and may alleviate any itching in the surgically treated area. Choose something fragrance-free and free of glycolic, retinoid or other possibly irritating ingredients. Vitamin E oil and petroleum jelly are acceptable alternatives.

Avoid any vigorous physical activity over the following two-three weeks, or as advised by () M.D. Direct trauma and physical stress may result in a separation of the suture edges or a wider scar.

The first year

In the 12 months following surgery, you must wear a water-proof sunscreen with at least an SPF 30, at all times in the surgically treated area including the suture line. This is imperative at least 30 minutes before any prolonged sun exposure is expected. Protective clothing and a wide-brimmed hat for facial incision lines is highly recommended. New scars are very sensitive to sunlight and, if, unprotected, may result in permanent changes in scar color to either a darker, lighter or discolored shade.

Irregular scars

Rarely, a scar will take on a nodular, bumpy, raised or thickened appearance; the scar formation may be hypertrophic or keloid. If this should happen, please contact our office as soon as possible. There are medications that may be effective to flatten and improve the scar as it is forming.