

**Caring for Your Child**  
**Wound Care after Plastic Surgery**

**Introduction**

Most plastic surgery procedures involve an incision in the skin that is closed with sutures. Your surgeon will determine the length and shape of the closure, and he will also decide what kind of sutures to use. While individual surgeons may vary in their choice of suture material and in their specific wound care instructions, general guidelines are listed below.

**After the Operation**

Your child will go to the post-anesthesia care unit (PACU). The PACU staff will let you know when you may join your child in the PACU, and when your child is ready to go home. The nurse will explain your post-op instructions to you, including the type of dressing your child has and how to care for the incision.

**Caring for Your Child's Incision**

**Absorbable sutures and dermabond**

- Dermabond is liquid glue that is applied to a closed incision at the end of the operation. It is waterproof and holds the wound edges together.
- Your child should avoid scratching, rubbing, or picking at the incision, as it may loosen the Dermabond before the incision has healed.
- Do not apply antibiotic ointment or Vaseline to Dermabond as it may loosen or dissolve the glue.
- Dermabond will gradually loosen over 5-10 days.
- In most cases, your surgeon will also use absorbable sutures underneath the skin to provide additional strength to the wound closure.

**Steri-Strips (paper tape reinforced with thread)**

- Steri-Strips will stick to the incision for about 7-14 days before loosening.
- Do not pull them off before they loosen on their own.
- Steri-Strips may get wet, but avoid scrubbing over them.
- Do not apply lotion or ointment to the incision while the strips are in place.
- If a rash or blisters develop, this may mean that your child's skin is sensitive to an adhesive (Benzoin, Mastisol, or Dermabond) that was applied to the skin before placing the Steri-Strips. These adhesives help Steri-Strips to stick better. If this occurs, call our office at 215-590-2208 for advice. We may suggest using an adhesive remover to relieve the rash.

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### **Gauze dressings**

- The surgeon may allow you to remove the dressing on the day after the operation.
- Your child may be allowed to bathe or shower 24-48 hours after the procedure, after the dressing has been removed.

### **Sutures**

- If you can see your child's sutures, you may be asked to apply antibiotic ointment lightly to the incision, once or twice a day, to reduce crusting and make suture removal easier.
- Your surgeon will decide when you need an appointment for suture removal. He may allow you to remove the sutures at home.
- Sometimes the buried absorbable sutures may work themselves through the skin and become visible. They may look like white sewing thread and there may be some drainage around the suture (suture abscess). You may call the office for advice, or you may use tweezers and small scissors to remove the suture, which will usually solve the problem.

### **Follow up Care**

- Your surgeon will tell you when to return to the office for follow up.
- Please call 215-590-2208 to schedule the appointment.
- Your surgeon may tell you to return only on an "as needed" basis. For simple straight-forward procedures, follow up may not be necessary unless you have questions or concerns. You may call 215-590-2208 to speak with one of our nurses if problems arise.

### **Additional Wound Healing Concerns**

- It is normal to have some swelling and some bruising at the operative site for at least 2 weeks.
- Your child may have some pain or act fussy after surgery. Tylenol can be given up to every 4 hours for mild to moderate discomfort. Follow the directions on the label. Your surgeon may prescribe a stronger pain medicine for moderate to severe pain.

### **Scar Care**

- Avoid excessive sun exposure and use a good sun block after the incision has healed.
- The scar will change over the course of a year. Many pediatric scars will become pink and raised over the first 2 months, then gradually lighten, soften, and flatten.
- Your surgeon may discuss other options for improving the appearance of scars such as massage, silicone rubber sheeting or gel, steroid injections, laser photocoagulation, pressure garments, or long-term use of Steri-Strips or tape.

**Contact the Office for the Following:**

**Signs of infection:**

- Increasing redness, swelling or pain at the surgical site
- Fever greater than 101°F under the arm or 102°F by mouth or rectally
- Drainage from the incision

**Other reasons to call:**

- If the wound edges open or separate, or if your child falls and disrupts the closure
- If you have any questions or concerns
- Monday through Friday, 8 AM -5 PM call our office at 215-590-2208
- Evenings, weekends, and holiday, call the CHOP telephone operator at 215-590-1000 and ask to speak with the plastic surgery resident or fellow on call

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