

Wound Care after Orthopedic Surgery

Why is orthopedic wound care needed?

After surgery it is important to do wound care at home. This helps the wound to heal. It also prevents the wound from becoming infected.

What supplies are needed?

- Gauze sponges
- Other: _____

How often is wound care done?

The dressing is left in place for 3 to 4 days after the procedure.

- If the tape is loose before it needs to be changed, use more tape to hold it in place.

After the first dressing change, change the dressing every other day until the old gauze is dry. When there is no more drainage, you may leave steri-strips open to air.

- The dressing should always be clean and dry. If the dressing gets wet or dirty, it must be changed.
- If an elastic bandage (Ace[®]) is being used, be careful not to wrap it too tight. If there is swelling around the wrap, take it off and re-wrap.

Follow these steps to change the dressing:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
 2. Take off the old dressing and throw it away. Look at the wound for signs of infection. Signs include redness, swelling and drainage. If the drainage is green call your child's doctor.
 3. Wash your hands again with soap and water.
 4. Cover the wound with a dry gauze sponge. Use tape to keep the gauze in place.
- If there are steri-strips on the wound and there is no drainage on the old dressing, you do not need a new dressing. Many times the steri-strips will fall off by themselves.
 - If the wound has stitches or staples, the dressing changes must be done even if there is no drainage on the old dressing. The staples will be removed by the doctor, PA, NP or nurse about two weeks after the procedure.



Will the dressing change hurt?

Taking the tape off the old dressing may cause some pain. Older children may find that helping remove the tape helps lessen the pain. Your child must wash their hands with soap and water if they help with their own dressing change.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has:

- Redness around the wound that gets worse.
- Drainage from the wound that makes the dressing wet within 24 hours.
- Swelling of the skin around the wound.
- Pain that gets worse or lasts 7 to 10 days after going home from the hospital.
- A temperature of 101.2°F (38.3°C) or higher.
- Special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.