



Metrolina Dermatology  
and Skin Surgery Specialists

## Frequently Asked Questions about Postoperative Wound Care

### Can I go exercise today? Why not?

- *No - you will break your sutures.*
- *Rest for one week if the wound is on your face; 2-8 weeks if anywhere else.*

### How long should I ice the wound?

- *Applying ice to the wound is recommended every 15-20 minutes for the first 48 hours.*
- *Use it up to 72 hours if the area is still swollen or bruised.*

### Why should I ice over this big bandage...it's not getting through?

- *Icing **over** the bandage is imperative and **IS** getting through the bandage to the site. A few degrees temperature difference is all the wound needs to aid in swelling and discomfort.*

### When can I wash my hair?

- *The area can get wet after 24 hours. You can shower and wash your hair after the pressure bandage comes off, but **avoid** scrubbing the surgery site area for one week.*

### When can the site get wet?

- *The site can get wet starting 24 hours **after** surgery unless otherwise told*

### What do I do after completing the wound care for 5-7 days (head/neck) and 10-12 days (trunk/extremities)?

- *Stop the hydrogen peroxide after 3 days – it will irritate the skin.*
- *The area can be cleaned with antibacterial soap and water.*
- *Leave it open/uncovered to the air unless it is oozing – in that case CALL US.*

### When can I put make up, sunscreen, or facial/body moisturizer on the scar?

- *Make up, sunscreen, and face/body moisturizers can be applied gently to the scar after 1 week.*
- *It is **IMPORTANT** to keep the area covered away from the sun for at least 6 months during the healing process for optimal cosmetic appearance.*
- *Do **NOT** massage the area for 2 months. At two months, you may massage the area 5 times daily for 5 minutes*

### Do I need to use scar creams or oils (example: Vitamin E oil/Mederma) to aid in healing?

- *Do not put anything on that we have not told you to.*
- *A silicone based scar cream can be used 2-3 weeks after the site has healed. Dr. Haberle's favorite one is Strataderm which can be purchased at our office.*
- *If you have any questions, please call us.*

### The scar is still numb; is this normal?

- *Yes - the scar can remain numb, firm, and red for several months.*

### My scar is lumpy, when can I massage it?

- *The stitches under the skin take anywhere from 2-4 months to dissolve and will be lumpy and bumpy until they fully dissolve*
- *Do **NOT** start massaging the surgical site UNTIL 2 MONTHS. At this time, apply firm pressure and massage 5 times daily for 5 minutes.*

### How long do I need to wear the compression stockings? (Only if your wound is on the lower leg)

- *We recommend wearing the stockings if you will be standing on your feet for longer than 15-20 minutes. This will aid in healing of the wound and increase circulation.*
- *Wear them for 2 weeks or longer if not healed.*
- *Wear them if you are in the car/plane for more than 20 minutes.*
- *Still put your feet up as much as possible.*

## **The Wound Healing Process After the First 1-2 Weeks of Bandaging**

- Once the bandages are removed, the scar will be red and firm (especially in the lip/chin area). This is normal and will fade in time. It might take 6-12 months for this to occur.
- Massaging the area will help soften the scar and fade quicker. Begin to massage the scar 8 weeks after surgery. To massage, apply pressure directly and firmly over the scar with the fingertips and move in a circular motion. Massage the area 5 times daily for up to 5 minutes each. Repeat until the scar is no longer firm.
- Approximately 6-8 weeks after the surgery, it is not uncommon to see the formation of “tender pimple-like” bump along the scar. This is normal. As the scar continues to mature and the stitches underneath the skin begin to dissolve, this might occur. Do not pick or squeeze, this will resolve on its own. Should one break open producing a small amount of drainage, apply ointment (such as Aquaphor, Vaseline, or polysporin) a few times a day until the wound is completely healed.
- Numbness, itching, and sensitivity to temperature changes can occur after surgery. It might take 12-18 months for the feeling to return to normal. During this time, sensations of itchiness, tingling, and occasional sharp pains might be noted. These feelings are normal and will subside once the nerve has completely healed.