

VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery

Care After Surgery and for Your Wounds

Instructions for care after office surgery

Leave the dressing on for 24 to 48 hours if possible. If it comes off replace with a similar dressing. If it sticks on when you are removing it just soak for a while with soapy water. If you can take Extra Strength Tylenol then take one or two of these as needed for the pain or discomfort. If you can take Benadryl, the antihistamine pill or caplet, it may help you sleep at night.

Healing is most often made worse by doing things that should not be done. **NEVER** use the following:

Never use: Peroxide, rubbing alcohol, Iodine or Betadine, Neosporin Ointment, Polysporin Ointment, Triple Antibiotic Ointment, Vaseline Ointment. Ointments are based on grease, like for lubricating your car. People are water based and grease irritates the skin and tissues. The other products are caustic, like battery acid. None of these are appropriate for open wounds, never. There are some newer, better products now available as Neosporin and Polysporin **CREAM**. They are hard to find but are replacing ointments now. Look for them.

Many have used Vaseline Ointment to soften skin. It actually breaks it down in old people with very thin skin. You should use Vaseline **Cream** or **Lotion**, as these are water based products and should not irritate the skin. An example of something we do recommend is Vaseline Intensive Care Lotion. There are many lotions and creams that may be used to put on the skin but Ointments should NEVER be used.

If you have an injury or wound and were told to wash the area with soap and water. Here are some tips:

Bacteria and germs on the surface of wounds and the skin are best removed by aggressive washing with just plain soap and water. I tell people to use the same soap they are currently using to wash their face. Do not change brands as some people are sensitive to certain formulations of soaps. Use what you normally have been using. Never use hot or cold water, make it lukewarm.

Generally it is best to lather up a washcloth in the shower then scrub the incision or wound. Get dried blood off and remove wound debris as much as practical. Soap surrounds germs and allows them to float off while washing. The use of sterile water or saline is not needed and does not work as well. Use plain water, a washcloth and soap then scrub the area clean. It is normal to get some bleeding. If you have thin blood then you may need to apply a dressing and then pressure. It is appropriate to cover with a dry dressing if you are told to do so, or use the special dressing that we recommended for your particular situation.

How do you control excessive bleeding:

Wounds and surgery sites will ooze or bleed. This is expected. One of the functions of the dressing is to collect the oozing and also to put some pressure on the area to minimize the ooze. If it is excessive then it is well to apply pressure directly to the wound. Use the palm of your hand and press hard, about 5 pounds of pressure. You must maintain the pressure for 15 or 20 minutes without releasing. If you release and check the area every 2 or 3 minutes it will never work. Do not remove the dressing, just add to it. If it continues give us a call or go to the Emergency Room.

Common causes of skin irritation:

The first thing to do if you have a skin irritation is to stop putting on everything your friends and neighbors tell you to put on it. Human skin is designed to work normally without anything on it, no ointments, lotions or even creams. Also, dry skin never killed anybody.

Washing- You should wash daily or more if hot and sweating. This cleans off old layers of dead skin and minimizes bacteria. Use lukewarm water not hot nor cold. You do not want to over wash. Your body has natural oils that keep your skin soft. You should not over do it. Some soaps have a lot of additives, scents and flavors. I recommend plain soaps such as Dial.

Laundry- Many people become sensitive to detergents. Most common is Tide, Cheer and Wisk in my experience. If you are having skin sensitivity it is best to use hypoallergenic detergents. I use ALL hypoallergenic, ALL "Free", it is a clear liquid without scents and flavors. Never use fabric softeners as these are common for causing skin irritation. Do not use the stuff in the washer and do not use the pads in the dryer.

Clothing dye- People can be sensitive to the dye in clothing. If you suspect this try white socks or shirts.

Chemical exposure- Things to avoid are chemicals such as Chlorox or ammonia to clean the floor, sprays for the garden or yard. Even brushing up against some plants can start irritations. Neither the pool nor the Gulf of Mexico are good for you. They are full of bacteria, algae and fungus, especially the ocean. It contains human, animal and chemical waste.

Sensation:

Numbness may be evident at first. Later, as healing begins you may feel pulling, stretching, tingling, intermittent sharp pains. It may itch as nerve endings wake up or grow back. These are all normal.

Bruising:

Everybody will get some black and blue areas after surgery of any type. Some times it is very pronounced. Many vitamins and medications with thin blood making it seem worse. The discoloration may last a long time. It depends on the patient, how fast they heal and how good the circulation is. The rate of healing slows with age. There may be some irritation around the stitches.

Scars after healing:

Plastic surgeons often use more, smaller sutures rather than fewer, larger sutures if possible. If the area is under considerable tension then larger stitches may be needed. Smaller, closely spaced stitches leave a smaller scar mark than larger, widely spaced sutures. There are frequently absorbable sutures inside wounds if they are otherwise surgically clean.

In the long run your body forms scar tissue as it repairs itself. This is part of the normal healing process. The areas may become hardened as the healing scar tissue is formed. Normally this firm tissue then softens and may with time disappear completely. This is not a function of how the procedure was done but rather a function of the patient's own way of healing. Some patients form too much scar tissue and we cannot control this.

One thing we can do is ask that you avoid sun exposure.

The sun:

The sun can easily burn surgical sites. Sun exposure will make the area more visible and scar-like. You should avoid any exposure to the sun for several months after a surgical procedure. The use of sun block helps. You should use protective clothing and sun block any time you are out in the sun anyway.