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Skin Surgery Care Instructions

How to care for the surgical site

- If possible, the original bandage should remain dry and in place for 24 to 48 hours following the procedure.
- How to change the bandage:
 - Wash your hands
 - Remove the bandage
 - Using a Q-tip, cleanse the wound gently with antibacterial soap and water
 - Cover the wound with a small amount of Vaseline
 - Apply a clean bandage
- Unless specifically directed by your physician, do not apply antibacterial ointments (including Neosporin or Polysporin) to the surgery site. Also avoid hydrogen peroxide.
- In general, avoid lifting or any strenuous activity for at least 2 weeks after the procedure.
- Avoid pools, hot tubs, ocean and lake water until sutures are removed.
- If Steri-strips were applied over the sutures:
 - Leave them in place and wash over the top with antibacterial soap and water
 - If they fall off before suture removal, cover the wound with Vaseline and a bandage

What to expect immediately after the surgery

- Swelling, bruising and redness are common and should improve over several days.
- Most surgical wounds drain a clear yellow fluid initially. This should also improve over the next week or so.
- Mild discomfort at the site may be experienced for several days following the procedure. Although it is usually not necessary, you may apply an ice pack for 15 minutes every two hours to reduce swelling or discomfort.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol Extra Strength) may be taken every 4 to 6 hours as needed for pain. Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen for pain as these will cause you to bleed more. Significant bleeding is unlikely but may occur, especially if you are taking any blood thinners, such aspirin, ibuprofen, Coumadin or Plavix.
 - If this happens, you should apply firm, direct pressure to the site for 20 minutes. Do not be tempted to peek at the wound during that time. If the bleeding persists, apply pressure again for an additional 20 minutes. If there is still continuous bleeding, then contact our office as early as possible during the day for assistance. If it is after hours, call our office number and you will be directed to the provider on call.

What to expect after sutures are removed

- Surgical wounds are initially red and swollen following the procedure. Although it will slowly improve, this redness may persist for up to 12 months, which is generally the amount of time it takes for a scar to completely mature.
- To help improve the cosmetic outcome:
 - Massage the scar twice daily with a lotion or scar solution gel.
 - Silicone sheeting (sold in pharmacies) may also be used.
 - Protect the scar from sun exposure.

You should contact our office if you notice spreading redness or increasing pain, warmth, tenderness, swelling or a creamy discharge.