

Postoperative Instructions for the Care of Suture Lines and Incisions

❖ If your incision has a *Gauze Dressing*:

- Remove any gauze dressings 24 hours after surgery. If Steri-Strips or bonding adhesives are present, allow them to fall off naturally. **DO NOT REMOVE THEM!**
- After the gauze is removed, you may shower and wash directly over the incision using mild soap or shampoo. Stay out of pools, hot tubs, the ocean or any standing water until the stitches are removed.
- Apply antibiotic ointment (Polysporin, Bacitracin or Bactroban or are preferred to Neosporin, which is likelier to cause allergy), to the incision 2-3 times a day after washing the area with mild soap (e.g. Ivory) or shampoo.
- You may redress the incision using dry gauze and secure it with tape.

❖ If your incision has *Steri-Strips*:

- If your incision has been reinforced with Steri-Strips or bonding adhesives, allow them to fall off naturally. **DO NOT REMOVE THEM!** Remove any gauze that may have been applied after 24 hours.
- You may shower in 24 hours with the Steri-strips in place. The Steri-strips may get wet. Pat them dry after showering.

❖ If your incision has *No Dressing*:

- Gently wash directly over wound. You may use a Q-tip dipped in Hydrogen Peroxide to remove any dried, crusted material.
- Apply Polysporin, Bacitracin or Bactroban ointment to the incision 2-3 times a day after washing. If you are susceptible to skin allergies use Vaseline.
- You may shower after 24 hours, washing directly over the incision using mild soap or shampoo. Stay out of pools, hot tubs, the ocean or any standing water until the stitches are removed.

❖ **Facial Incisions:**

- Do not lean over to pick up objects from floor or tie shoes etc. Avoid straining.
- Keep your head elevated on two pillows when reclining.

❖ **All Incisions:**

- You may use ice on the area to control swelling and soothe pain – however, be careful not to apply ice directly on skin. Use gauze or a soft cloth between the ice and the skin. A bag of frozen peas may serve as a 'cooling pack.'
- Do not lift or push anything heavy. Avoid excessive stretching of the area.

❖ **Lower Limb Incisions:**

- Lacerations below the knee should be supported by an ACE bandage (wrapped from toe to knee) while walking. The ACE can be taken off at night. (Never leave the foot out of an ACE wrap otherwise it will become swollen!).
- Rest as much as possible with the foot elevated to the level of the heart.