

## Incisions and Scars

**CAN I GET MY WOUND WET?** Usually wounds that have been sutured/stitched can get wet in the shower with soap and water after 24 to 48 hours. No baths, swimming or prolonged soaking is allowed for at least one week.

**SHOULD I ICE?** Ice should be applied for the first 24 to 48 hours. This helps to control the pain, edema or swelling, and inflammation. Ice should not be applied directly to the skin.

**SHOULD I KEEP IT COVERED?** If the wounds are not actively draining after 24 to 48 hours, it is usually not necessary to keep all incisions covered with gauze. However, a patient may decide to keep a wound covered with a band-aid or gauze for cosmetic reasons or because clothing or some other activity will otherwise irritate the area.

**WILL THERE BE A SCAR?** Any incision through the full-thickness of the skin always results in a scar. Individuals of certain ethnic groups (Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and others whose family tree includes the Mediterranean Sea area) will sometimes observe that their more heavily pigmented skin leads to more prominent final scars. Dr. Wells is trained to do his best in minimizing scar formation but some amount of scar formation is unavoidable.

**Avoid the Sun.** Stay out of the sun. Sunlight on a scar can cause discoloration, leading to a more pronounced, unsightly scar. Dr. Wells recommends that you use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or above on your healed incisions to protect your skin after cosmetic surgery.

**Can I use Vitamin E?** It is recommended **not** to use for the first 2 weeks after surgery or you may widen the scar. Massaging the scar is known to be beneficial. You may use your regular moisturizer. There is evidence that scars can be improved by taping them continuously for 3 months post operative; once steri strips have come off. Use Micropore Paper Tape. Apply it directly along the incision line and change only when it loosens or becomes sticky (7 to 10 days).

**SCAR TREATMENT WITH SILICONE: SHOULD I USE SILICONE INSTEAD?** There are now on the market many different over-the-counter preparations that mainly use silicone for scar treatment. The application of silicone gel sheeting to early scars (daily, for two to three months) has been shown to reduce overall scarring in some individuals. To be most effective, the silicone gel sheeting must be worn daily for two to three months. It is only recommended for hypertrophic scars.

**HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE MY SCARS TO HEAL COMPLETELY?** For adults, the total healing period for a scar is close to 1 year. Nearly, all scars will undergo different color changes during this healing period, changing from red to purplish to pink with increased or decreased pigmentation. Exactly how your scar will heal depends on several factors, including your skin type, the size and placement of your incisions, your smoking status (smokers are more likely to heal badly), and whether you had any complications from your surgery.

**WHY IS MY SCAR BUMPY OR KNOTTY WEEKS LATER?** Sometimes patients ask why an incision that was previously flat becomes raised four to six weeks later. This has to do with a normal build-up of scar tissue in the wound and is usually no cause for real alarm. If the scar becomes bumpy or raised during the first two months after the operation the patient, at this point, should frequently rub or massage, this early scar. Frequent, daily rubbing with the finger with or without lotion will help to decrease the bumpiness. However, even if no rubbing is done or is possible, the scars almost always flatten in the next one to two months and, finally, into a more acceptable scar.

**STITCH ABSCESS** – Sometimes patients will notice a small scar eruption or spitting of pus, blood, and/or suture/stitch material from the previously closed incision weeks or months later. This may represent a small stitch abscess. This unpleasant, sometimes painful occurrence is the body's natural reaction against the foreign suture material required to hold together the deep tissues of the incision. In the event of a stitch abscess, antibiotic ointment will help to quickly resolve the problem. If not, call Dr. Wells. These suture reactions usually cease after three months from the time of the operation, when deeper tissue stitches have dissolved.

**WHY IS MY SCAR STILL NUMB?** Numbness around the incision is usual following surgery. The numbness is a result of the cutting of tiny nerves. These tiny nerves need time to re-grow. Therefore, numbness usually takes several months to recover completely.

**WHY DOES MY SCAR STILL HURT WEEKS OR MONTHS LATER?** The normal wound healing of an incision may cause it to hurt periodically. In this case the application of frequent massage is recommended. This pain of inflammation is usually normal and temporary. Ibuprofen can be very effective for pain relief.