



Wound Care - Sutures (Stitches)

Your wound was closed with sutures (stitches) to help speed healing, reduce the chance of infection, and reduce scarring. The wound pain decreases after 24 to 48 hours. If you have not had a tetanus booster in the past 5 to 10 years, you may need a tetanus shot.

How to Care for Yourself at Home

- + Keep wound clean and dry for 2 to 3 days.
- + For arms or leg wounds, elevate the affected limb as much as possible for the first 24 hours to reduce pain and swelling.
- + After 24 hours you may change the bandage. If the bandage is stuck to the wound, use warm water to soak it off.
- + Gently clean around the wound with warm water and soap and dress it as recommended by your doctor.
- + Do not pull on the ends of the sutures.
- + For a mouth or lip wound, rinse your mouth after meals with warm salted water (a teaspoon of salt in a glass of water).
- + If you have a wound on your head, you may wash your hair gently after you get home.
- + If the wound bleeds, apply gentle direct pressure for 10-15 min.

Non-absorbable sutures:

+ You have had a wound repaired with non-absorbable sutures.

- + Make an appointment with your family doctor to have your sutures removed in days.

Absorbable sutures:

- + You have had a wound repaired with absorbable sutures. These

generally do not need to be removed by your doctor. As your wound begins to heal over the next 7 to 10 days, the sutures begin to fall off at about this time.

- + At 7 to 10 days if your stitches are loose, you can remove them by wiping with a clean gauze pad or cotton ball. **DO NOT** pull your stitches out - they should wipe away easily.
- + Have your family doctor take them out if they are still in place after 10 days.

When to Get Help

- **Go to the nearest Emergency Department** if you are experiencing any of the following:
 - + Numbness or severe swelling below the wound and cannot move the joint below the wound.
 - + Bleeding continues despite pressure.
 - + Red streaks coming from the injured site.
 - + Increased temperature or fever.
 - + Plus draining from the wound.

Recommended Follow Up

- See your primary care provider in __days

To Learn More Ask

- + Your Primary Care Provider.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca.