

what is an incision?

An incision is a surgical 'cut' through which an operation is performed. It may be closed with stitches or staples outside the body. Other types of incisions may be sutured on the inside, with small sticky strips called steri-strips on the outside.

how do i care for my incision?

The wound should be kept clean and dry for 5–14 days.

Day 1: Try to avoid showering or bathing.

Day 2: Wash the incision gently with soap or water. Dry gently.

Never apply cream or lotion unless instructed by your doctor. Monitor daily for redness, swelling, bleeding, drainage and increased pain.

what if i have a dressing over my incisions?

A dressing (typically gauze or a non-adhesive) may be placed over the incision site. The dressing absorbs drainage that comes from the wound and keeps it clean, dry and protected.

should i change the dressing?

Follow the instructions given to you by your doctor or nurse. Ensure a clean preparation surface for your dressing supplies. Wash hands before removing the dressing and before applying the new dressing to the incision area. Apply the dressing as directed by your doctor or nurse. Place the used dressing in a plastic bag before disposing it.

will stitches be removed?

Some deep (internal) stitches do not need to be removed. Stitches or staples applied to the outside of the body will be removed after 3–21 days. Typically, stitches will be removed within 5–14 days. Your doctor or nurse may apply skin tape or steri-strips to provide additional wound strength. Skin tape or steri-strips are usually left on until they peel away from the incision line or until advised to be removed by your doctor or nurse.



healing

Limiting movement to the area of your incision improves healing. You should avoid activities that could pull the edges of the wound apart. A healing scar will darken and become more noticeable if exposed to the sun so limit sun exposure and apply sunscreen for the first 6 months. Rarely does a thick irregular scar (keloid) occur. Keloid scars occur due to excessive tissue growth at the site of the incision or wound. Keloid scar management should be discussed with your doctor.

call your doctor

It is recommended that you contact your doctor if you observe:

- An increased area of redness and/or swelling around the incision line
- Increased discomfort around the incision line
- Skin that is hot to touch around the incision line
- New or excessive drainage from the incision line
- A body temperature above 38°C or 101°F

incision care

Helpful additional information for the care of your incision includes:

- Avoid wearing clothing that will irritate or rub the incision line
- Avoid direct exposure to the sun. Use PABA-free sun screen products (SPF 15 or higher) only after all stitches or staples have been removed and the incision line has healed
- Avoid applying make-up, perfume, deodorant and products containing alcohol directly on the incision line until it is healed
- If you need to shave, use an electric shaver around the incision line area to minimise cuts and potential infection