

Sutured Wound Care

Home Care

Keep the wound completely dry for the first 24 hours. Then start washing it gently with warm water and liquid soap 1 or 2 times a day. Put on an antibiotic ointment after you wash the wound to keep a thick scab from forming over the sutures (stitches). The wound should not be soaked. After 24 hours, your child can take brief showers. Avoid swimming, baths, or soaking the wound until the sutures are removed. Water in the wound can interfere with healing.

If the dressing over the area gets wet or dirty, replace it with a bandage or gauze to cover the stitches. If you have been told not to change the dressing, call your healthcare provider.

Most contaminated wounds that are going to become infected do so 24 to 72 hours after the injury. A 2- to 3-millimeter rim of pinkness or redness just around the edge of a wound can be normal. However, the area of redness should not spread. It is also normal for there to be some pain and tenderness. The pain and swelling should be greatest during the second day and then become less in the days to follow. If the wound continues to be painful and the redness spreads, call your child's doctor.

Suture Removal

Sutures are ready for removal at different times, depending on where the wound is located. The following table can serve as a guide.

Area of Body	Number of Days
Face	3 to 4
Neck	5
Scalp	6
Chest or abdomen	7

Arms and backs of hands	7
Legs and tops of feet	10
Back.	10
Palms of hands or soles of feet	14

Your child's stitches should be removed on the correct day. Stitches removed too late can leave unnecessary skin marks or scars. If any sutures come out too early, call your child's healthcare provider. In the meantime, reinforce the wound with tape that pulls the edges together or with butterfly Band-Aids. Continue the tape until the date when the sutures are due to be removed.

Protection

After removal of sutures:

- Protect the wound from injury during the following month.
- Avoid sports that could reinjure the wound.

Scars

A sutured wound will develop a scar. All wounds heal by scarring. The scar can be kept to a minimum by taking the sutures out at the right time, preventing wound infections, and protecting the wound from being injured again during the first month after the injury. The healing process continues for 6 to 12 months. Only after this time will the scar assume its final appearance.

Call your child's healthcare provider immediately if:

- An unexplained fever (over 100 degrees F, or 37.8 degrees C) occurs.
- There is a red streak or red area that spreads from the wound.

Call your child's healthcare provider within 24 hours if:

- It looks infected (for example, pus or a pimple).
- A stitch comes out early.

You have other questions or concerns.

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This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

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