

## **Postoperative Wound Care Instructions**

Read these instructions immediately after leaving the office.

**\*\*If you have any questions or concerns, CALL our office at 404-446-3200\*\***

The **ONLY** appropriate form of communication for a postoperative concern is a **PHONE CALL** to the **OFFICE**. Do not use any other form of communication.

### **Day 1 - First 24 hours after surgery:**

1. Do not remove the pressure bandage that has been applied to your **surgical site**.
2. Keep the bandage dry
3. Apply **ICE** on top of the bandage for 15 to 20 minutes every hour that you are awake. Do this for the first 48 hours.

### **Days 2-7 –Changing the bandage:**

1. Continue to ice on Day 2
2. After 24 hours, remove the pressure bandage. The site can get wet (and you may shower). Then you will do the following routine twice a day for 6 days. (The goodie-bag you were sent home with includes the sterile Vaseline, non-adherent pads, and paper tape mentioned in the following steps.)
  - a. Wash your hands with soap and water before changing the bandage.
  - b. Clean the surgical site with antibacterial soap (i.e. Hibiclens or if your surgical site is near the eyes use Baby Shampoo). Use a Q-tip to remove any crusts or dried blood from the site.
  - c. Using a Q-tip, apply a thin layer of sterile Vaseline to the site.
  - d. Cover the site with a clean piece of the non-adherent pad. Cut into a thin strip with a clean scissor so that one pad can be used for multiple bandage changes. Then secure with paper tape.
3. If you have dissolvable sutures: stop bandaging after 6 days (7 days post-surgery)
  - After 6 days of wound care, there is nothing for you to do except protect the site from trauma, pressure, friction, and/or stretching for 8 weeks, unless you were given other site specific instructions.
4. If you have black nylon non-dissolvable sutures: after 6 days (7 days post-surgery) continue to keep the site clean with antibacterial soap, apply Vaseline, and bandage once a day until your suture removal appointment.

### **Bleeding:**

If bleeding occurs following surgery, apply constant pressure on the bandage for 20 minutes without peeking! That will stop minor bleeding. If bleeding does not stop, **call the office**.

### **Pain management:**

We recommend the Tylenol/ibuprofen combination as first line treatment for anyone NOT on blood thinners and WITHOUT a history of stomach ulcers.

- Take 1000 mg of **Acetaminophen** (two 500 mg tablets) and 400mg of **Ibuprofen** (two 200mg tablets) immediately after surgery and every 8 hours for up to three (3) doses in 24 hours, as needed for pain. Make sure you take this combination on a full stomach.
- Don't forget that icing the area will also help control pain and will maximize the cosmetic results.

### **Activity:**

To reduce the possibility of bleeding, please follow these instructions:

- Limit all activities for the first 24 hours and limit strenuous activities, including exercise, for the first week following surgery. Limiting activities will help in the healing of your scar and cosmetic outcome.
- Keep the operative site elevated (if appropriate)
  - If your surgery was on the face, head, or neck: avoid bending or heavy lifting and straining, and sleep with your head and shoulders elevated on extra pillows.
  - If your surgery was on the shin: while elevating your leg, place a pillow underneath your knee to help alleviate pressure on your surgical site.

### **Infection:**

Infection seldom occurs when the wound care instructions have been carefully followed.

- Signs of infection are: increased pain, swelling, redness, warmth of the skin, or cloudy yellowish drainage several days after surgery. Call our office immediately if any of these symptoms occur (Note: Pain, swelling, and redness after the surgery are normal. If they continue to persist and/or increase, immediately **call the office**).

### **Healing and Follow up:**

- The way the scar will look depends on its size, location, your genetics, and general health. At first, it will be very bruised, lumpy, firm, red, numb, and uneven. Although the bruising will fade within 1 to 2 weeks, the scar could remain numb, firm, and red for up to a year. Remember, everyone heals at a different rate.
- Follow Up: In order to minimize your exposure to infections, we try to use all dissolvable sutures so you do not have to come back. We expect to hear from you regarding any concerns or questions when it comes to your scar. We will sometimes need to have you come in the same day if there are complications, while some concerns can be addressed over the phone. Regardless, Dr. Nalovic is very particular with her instructions and wants to hear from you. If we do not hear from you, we will always call and check on you approximately 8 weeks after your surgery.

**\*If you were prescribed an antibiotic, do not stop taking it until it is done. If side effects occur, please call our office.\***

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Postoperative Wound Care**

### **How long should I ice the wound?**

- *Applying ice to the wound is recommended for 15-20 minutes every hour while awake for the first 48 hours.*
- *Use it up to 72 hours if your surgical site involves or is near the eyelids, lips, or genitalia*

### **I cannot feel the coldness when I ice on top of my bandage.**

- *Since you are icing skin and NOT muscle, all you need is a couple degrees of coldness to help with the pain and swelling. It is working, so keep doing it!!!*

### **When can the site get wet?**

- *The site can get wet starting 24 hours **after** surgery.*

### **When can I wash my hair?**

- *The area can get wet after 24 hours. You can shower and wash your hair after the pressure bandage comes off, but **avoid** scrubbing the surgery site area for one week.*

### **What do I do after completing the wound care?**

- *Stop the antibacterial soap– it will irritate the skin.*
- *The top layer of skin should appear healed and there should be no staining on your bandage.*
- *You can resume your usual skin care routine. You can gently apply make up, sunscreen, and moisturizers to the scar. DO NOT massage these products in for 2 months.*
- *Leave it out to the air (unless healing by second intention, skin graft, interpolation flap, or non-dissolvable sutures were used).*

### **Do I need to use scar creams or oils (example: Vitamin E oil/Mederma) to aid in healing?**

- *No; scar creams and oils are not recommended. Do not put anything on that we have not told you to. If you have any questions, please call us.*

### **The scar is still numb; is this normal?**

- *Yes; the scar can remain numb, firm, and red for several months.*

### **How long do I need to wear the compression stockings? (Only if your wound is on the lower leg)**

- *We want you to wear the stockings after the pressure bandage is removed, on top of the clean bandage.*
- *Wear the compression stockings at all times, except when sleeping and showering, for 3 weeks or longer if not healed.*

### **Can I go golfing/running/play tennis/bike today? Why not?**

- *For one week no physical activity (that would increase your heart rate, increase blood pressure, or cause you to sweat)*
- *For the next 2-8 weeks be cautious not to cause any strain, pressure, or trauma to your surgical site.*

### **I'm feeling very tired after surgery. Is that normal?**

- *Yes! It is normal to feel tired and fatigued for a few days after the surgery.*

**IF you were prescribed an antibiotic, do not stop your antibiotic. If any side effects occur, please call us and we will change your prescribed antibiotic.**