

# Suture care

A suture is a stitch or row of stitches holding together the edges of a wound or surgical incision.

## Important information

Keep the wound dry for the first 24 hours.

The wound needs time to start healing and moisture will slow this down. After the first 24 hours, wetting the wound for a short time in the shower is acceptable. Pat the wound dry immediately after showering. Do not soak the wound or let your child swim until the sutures have been removed.

Keep your child from picking at scabs or covering dressings.

The scabs or covering dressings will fall off when the wound is healed or when the sutures are removed. A slight ooze may occur when the suturing is removed and this is normal.

## Wound healing

It is normal for the scar to be red in colour initially, but this will fade over the next few months.

Observe the wound for signs of infection which include:

- fever within 48 hours of suturing
- redness
- swelling
- increased pain
- excessive or persistent ooze
- pus or smelly discharge.

Your child's sutures are due to be removed in \_\_\_\_\_ days.

Your local doctor may remove the sutures.

If the sutures fall out before their removal date please see your child's doctor.

## Pain relief

If your child has mild pain then consider giving paracetamol (Panadol®, Dymadon®, Panamax®) or ibuprofen (Nurofen®) and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Next dose of \_\_\_\_\_ to be given at \_\_\_\_\_.

If you are concerned about possible signs of infection or have any other concerns take your child to the GP (local doctor) or emergency department.

## Wound healing and scarring

Scars form as a normal part of healing whenever the skin is damaged. All cuts will heal with a scar. However, the scar will be less noticeable if good care is given to the wound when it is healing.



During the first 6 to 8 weeks after the injury, the scar will change from a thick, red raised scar to a thinner, paler, more flexible one. Scars can take up to 2 years to fully mature. The final appearance of the scar depends on several factors including the extent of the original wound, inherited skin qualities and how well the scar was looked after.

## How to look after your scar

### Scar massage

After the sutures have been removed from a wound, or around 2 to 4 weeks after the injury, scar massage can be performed. This should be done for 5 to 10 minutes, twice a day. Do not massage any scar that is open or looks infected.

For the first 2 to 4 weeks, massage should be done along the same direction as the laceration. The pressure applied should be enough to change the colour of the scar from pink to pale, but should not be so firm that it is painful.

After about 4 weeks, the scar can be massaged in all directions. Continue to massage daily until the scar is pale and thin.

### Moisturising

Lotions such as Vitamin E cream, aloe vera, sorbolene or other un-fragranced products can be used to soften the scar and make massage easier.

### Sun protection

It is very important to protect the scar from sun damage, which can permanently discolour the scar. You should always cover the scar with at least SPF 30 sunblock or zinc cream, wear clothing that covers the scar and stay in the shade.

### Daily activity

It is important that your child avoids activities and areas that will get the wound dirty. This includes bike riding, skateboarding and swimming and play areas like sandpits.

### Problem scars

A scar is a problem if it is painful or itchy, hard or raised, restricts movement or remains purple or red.

Risk factors for problem scars include certain skin types (especially dark, Mediterranean or Asian skin), previous problem scars, or post-operative wound complications such as poor healing (greater than 3 weeks) or infection.

You should contact your GP if you are concerned that your child's scar is not healing as expected.



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