

## Surgical wound care

A balanced diet will give your child the building blocks their bodies need to heal a wound.

**Protein:** Provides the building material for muscles and skin

- Chicken
- Lean Beef
- Fish
- Beans /Pulses
- Nuts

**Milk and Dairy:** Good sources of Protein and Carbohydrate

- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese

**Carbohydrates:** Supply the Energy for Healing

- Wholegrain bread/cereal
- Potatoes
- Rice
- Pasta
- Fruit and Vegetables

**Vitamin A & C:** Supports the Immune System

- Orange Veg eg. Carrots
- Dark Leafy Vegetables eg. Spinach
- Citrus Fruit eg. Oranges, Mandarin and Grapefruit



## Problems with wound healing

Most surgical wounds heal without causing any problems. However, germs can start to grow in the wound, which can delay normal wound healing. Those involved with your child's care will do everything that they can to prevent your wound from becoming infected while you are in hospital. Certain people are more likely to develop wound infections.

### Children at Higher Risk

1. Have diabetes
2. Have a reduced Immune system (Leukaemia or having chemotherapy)
3. After a major operation, such as bowel surgery (e.g. appendicectomy)

### If a wound becomes infected it might

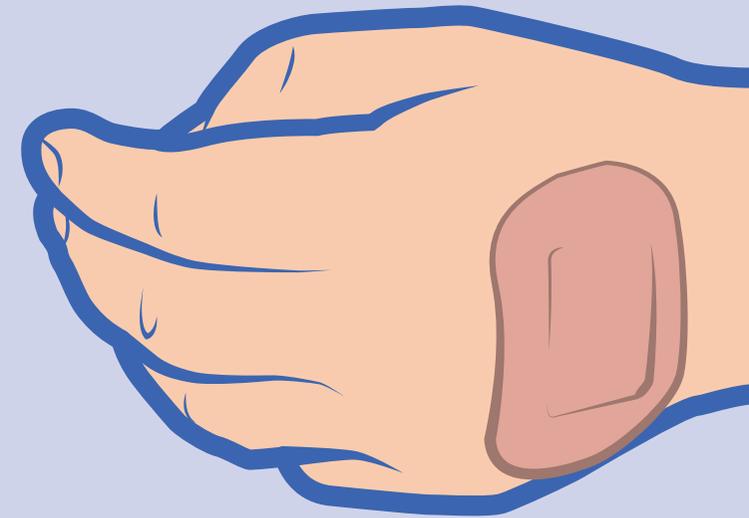
1. Become more painful
2. Look red, inflamed or swollen
3. Leak or weep liquid, pus or blood
4. Smell unpleasant

### Key Points to Remember

1. Always wash your hands before touching the wound or dressing
2. Never leave a wet dressing on a wound
3. **Do not** pick at the steristrips or the glue - it will come off on its own.

**If you are worried the wound is infected or does not look right, contact your GP or the surgical ward: RBHSC 028 9063 3398**

# Surgical Wound Care



## Surgical wounds

A surgical wound is the cut made in the skin by your doctor during an operation. At the end of the operation the cuts are stitched to allow the skin to heal. The length of time it takes for the wound to heal varies from person to person and from operation to operation.

## Dressings

Not all surgical wounds need dressings. The purpose of a dressing when it is applied is to:

1. Absorb any leak from the wound
2. Protection, until it is healed
3. Prevent stitches from catching clothing

## Stitches, Steristrips and Glue

The medical term for stitches is sutures. Other methods used to close a surgical wound include adhesive dressings, tapes (steristrips) and skin glue. Most stitches are dissolvable and do not need to be removed. If this is necessary, your nurse will arrange a follow-up appointment at the hospital or with your GP.

## Tissue Adhesive (skin glue)

Special skin glue can be used to close small wounds or used together with stitches to seal the wound. Until the glue has sloughed off naturally (usually 5-10 days), your child can shower and bathe gently. Don't try to scrub, soak or pick the glue off, it will come off by itself. Don't put a plaster on top of glued wounds.

## Caring for your wound

There are a number of things that you can do to look after your child's wound to lower the chance of infection and encourage healing.

### 1. Changing the dressing

The original dressing can be left in place for up to two days (or as advised by your consultant) providing that it is dry and not soaked with blood or any other liquid. Before you remove the dressing, you must wash your hands with soap and water and then carefully take the dressing off. Do not touch the healing wound with your fingers. The healing wound can then be left without a dressing.

### 2. Taking care of the stitches

Dissolvable stitches will usually disappear on their own in 7 to 10 days. Non-dissolvable stitches will be removed as per your consultant's instruction. During this time you may see small pieces of the stitch material poking out of the healing scar. Do NOT be tempted to pull on these. If there are loose ends which are catching on clothing, trim the stitch carefully with a clean pair of scissors. Otherwise wait until they are removed or fall out on their own. If the stitches cause pain or discomfort, contact the hospital for advice.

### 3. Sunblock

Use sunblock on healed wounds to prevent darkening of the scar for a year after the scar has healed.

### 4. Showering and Bathing

It is usually possible for your child to have a shower about 48 hours after surgery. Your nurse at the hospital will advise you if this is not the case following your particular operation.