



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Wound care

Patient information

Overview

- Wounds can be closed in three ways or a combination of these:
 - Wound closure strips (steristrips)
 - Wound closure glue
 - Sutures and staples
- Your clinician will have discussed with you about the chosen method of wound closure.
- Some wounds may not require closure.

Wound closure strips

- Wound closure strips (steristrips) can be removed after five to ten days depending on the type of injury.
- They are narrow strong adhesive strips that help to close the edges of a small wound and encourage the skin to heal.
- You can soak them off whilst bathing or showering - they should be moistened for about ten minutes and carefully removed. However, it is perfectly safe to leave the strips on the wound until they naturally fall off.
- Occasionally, wound closure strips fall off before the wound has healed. If this happens, please return to the Emergency Department or your GP surgery for further management.

Wound closure glue

- Medical glue is specially designed to treat wounds. It is as strong as stitches and has the added benefit of not leaving stitch marks either side of the wound.
- You should NEVER pick the glue off the wound; skin glue will naturally come off as the wound heals, usually between 5 to 10 days. Please do not pick at this even if it starts to itch. It may help to think of the glue as a 'pretend scab'.
- Glue is splash proof, but will dissolve and the wound will re-open if the wound is saturated or if exposed to any products e.g. shampoo.

- Sometimes, steri-strips are used in conjunction with skin glue; in these circumstances treat the wound as if it was glue only.
- There is a small chance the wound will re-open, if it does, please return to the emergency department.

Sutures

- Sutures hold the skin together until it heals itself. Sutures are made from different materials, but most sutures used in the hospital are nylon and need removing at a later date. Some sutures are absorbable and will dissolve without needing to be removed.
- The amount of time that sutures stay in will depend on where the wound is. It is important that you do not exceed this time as sutures may begin to irritate the skin or become buried and difficult to remove.
- Unless you have been told that the sutures are dissolvable, the sutures will require removing. You will need to make an appointment with your GP practice nurse to have these removed, unless an alternative plan is agreed with your clinician.

General wound care advice

- In most cases your wound will have been covered with a suitable dressing.
- Do not remove the dressing unless you are instructed to do so. If the dressing becomes soiled or wet, it should be replaced.
- Keep the wound dry, wash around it where possible.
- Do not cover with waterproof fingerstalls, plastic bags etc, unless you are advised to do so. This will make the wound soggy and more prone to infection.
- If the wound becomes hot, painful, red, swollen, smelly, or discharges or reopens, please inform your GP or call 111 for advice.

- If you feel unwell, develop fevers and/or any redness that is spreading from the wound, you must return to the emergency department immediately.
- The mark from the wound may take 6 months or more to fade in colour and may not completely disappear.

Your wound closure method

- Your wound has been closed today using _____ which should be removed in _____ days.
- Steristrips can be moistened and gently removed.
- Tissue glue does not need to be removed, it will fall off with the scab.
- Sutures and clips can be removed by your General Practitioner or the practice nurse. Please make the necessary appointment for as soon after the recommended removal date as possible.
- Sutures may leave tattoo marks around the wound, if not removed promptly at the recommended time.

Support

For general medical advice please use the NHS website, walk-in-centres, the **NHS 111** service or your GP.

NHS telephone advice **111**

NHS website www.nhs.uk

Your own GP and practice nurses are also available for general advice on care of your wound.

Emergency departments

Royal Sussex County Hospital: **01273 696955 Ext. 64261**

Princess Royal Hospital: **01444 448745**

St Richard's Hospital: **01243 788122**

Worthing Hospital: **01903 205111**

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