



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Wound care

Accident and emergency

Patient information

What is this information about?

Wounds can be closed in three ways, or a combination of these:

- Wound closure strips (also called steristrips)
- Medical glue
- Sutures (stitches) and staples.

Your clinician will have discussed with you the best method for your wound. Some wounds may not need closure.

Wound closure strips (Steristrips)

- Steristrips are thin, sticky strips that help hold the edges of a small wound together.
- They usually stay on for 5 to 10 days, depending on the injury.
- You can remove them by soaking in water (for example, during a bath or shower) for 10 minutes. Gently peel them off.
- It is also safe to leave them on until they fall off naturally.
- If they come off before the wound heals, return to the Emergency Department or see your GP.

Medical glue

- Skin glue is a special adhesive that holds wounds closed without the need for stitches.
- It is strong and will not leave stitch marks.
- The glue will naturally fall off as the wound heals (usually in 5 to 10 days).

Important

- Do not pick or scratch at the glue even if it itches.
- Think of the glue as a 'pretend scab'.
- The glue is splash-proof, not waterproof.
- Avoid soaking the wound or using products like shampoo on it.
- Sometimes steristrips are used along with glue: treat the wound as if glue-only.
- If the wound reopens, return to the Emergency Department.

Sutures (stitches)

- Sutures hold the skin closed while it heals.
- Most hospital sutures are made of nylon and need to be removed later.
- Some are dissolvable and will disappear on their own.

Removal:

- The removal time depends on the wound location. Leaving them in too long can cause irritation or make removal more difficult.
- If you have not been told they are dissolvable, assume they need to be removed.
- Book an appointment with your GP practice nurse unless told otherwise.
- If sutures are left in too long, they may leave small 'tattoo marks' around the wound.

General wound care tips

- Your wound is likely covered with a dressing. Do not remove it unless advised.
- If the dressing becomes wet or dirty, it should be replaced.
- Keep the wound dry. Wash around it, not over it.
- Avoid using plastic covers (like fingerstalls or plastic bags) unless told to. These can make the wound soggy and increase infection risk.

Watch for signs of infection

If you notice any of the following, contact your GP or call NHS 111:

- Redness, swelling, pain, or warmth around the wound.
- Discharge, bad smell, or wound reopening.
- Fever or feeling unwell.
- Redness spreading away from the wound.

Go to the Emergency Department immediately.

Will it leave a scar?

Scarring is normal. The mark may take 6 months or more to fade and may not completely disappear.

Your wound closure method

- Your wound has been closed today using _____.
- It should be removed in _____ days.
- Steristrips can be soaked and gently peeled off.
- Tissue glue will fall off on its own with the scab.
- Sutures or staples must be removed by your GP or practice nurse. Please book an appointment close to the recommended date.

Further support

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

The NHS website provides online health information and guidance.

There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre, Lewes Victoria Hospital, Horsham Minor Injuries Unit and Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital.

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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