

Your Health Checklist: Clean and Dress an Incision

As you recover from surgery or a procedure, you probably have an incision. Follow your healthcare provider's directions when caring for the area. Most of the time you will keep it covered with a bandage or dressing to prevent infection.

But you may have to clean the area and redress your incision on a regular basis. This checklist can help.

Do: Gather your supplies, including a washcloth, new bandage, medical tape, 2 pairs of clean medical gloves, and antibiotic ointment to use if instructed. Also have liquid soap and a trash can nearby.

Do: Wash your hands with warm water and soap. Lather and scrub for a count of 20, then dry your hands with a paper towel. Put on clean gloves.

Do: Remove the old bandage or dressing by pulling toward the wound and put it in the trash. Remove the gloves and throw them away. And wash your hands again.

Do: Check the area for any redness, swelling, irritation, or drainage.

Do: Put on a new pair of clean gloves. Pat the incision area gently with soap and warm water using a clean washcloth.

Do: Put on a new bandage or dressing and secure it in place with medical tape. Remove your gloves and throw them away. Wash your hands.

Do not: Ignore any redness, swelling, irritation, or drainage at the incision site. If you notice anything like this, call your healthcare provider.

This checklist can help when cleaning and dressing your incision area. Keep your incision area clean and covered to help healing and make sure to follow your healthcare provider's instructions when caring for the area.