

Taking Care of Stitches

Stitches--or sometimes staples or adhesive strips--are used to pull the edges of a cut together.

Taking good care of your stitches will help them heal properly.

To protect your wound, leave the bandage on for the first 24 to 48 hours.

And don't get it wet.

When you shower, cover the bandage with a plastic bag.

If you can, prop up the injured area when you sit or lie down.

You can take a nonprescription pain medicine to help with pain and swelling.

After the first 24 to 48 hours, you can remove the bandage and gently wash the wound.

If the bandage sticks to it, use warm water to loosen it.

But don't scrub or soak the wound, and don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol.

Change the bandage at least once a day and anytime it gets wet or dirty.

Carefully remove the old bandage, gently clean the wound, then apply a fresh bandage.

Now, while your wound is healing, you'll need to keep an eye on it.

Your doctor can tell you what to watch out for.

It's normal for a wound to swell a little or ooze a little blood at first.

But definitely call your doctor if you have any signs of infection, like increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness around the wound.

And call if you have red streaks leading from the wound, pus, or if you get a fever.

Your doctor will tell you when to come back to have your stitches or staples removed.

Don't try to take them out yourself.

If you have adhesive strips, leave them until they fall off.