

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CARE OF OPEN WOUNDS

1. Your wound will heal by "second intention," that is, it will heal over by itself without the aid of stitches or wound closure. This process generally takes 4-8 weeks, depending on the size of the wound. During this period, the following instructions will allow you to keep the wound clean while promoting the healing process. Please have patience while it heals over.

2. Scar formation is a dynamic process. Your wound site has already begun to heal and will continue to do so for many months. After the early scar is formed, it will mature for the ensuing six months.

3. A special bandage has been placed on your wound in **two layers**. Immediately next to the skin is a thin, occlusive one that will promote wound healing. This flat, inner bandage should remain in place for the entire week. A second layer of gauze padding was separately taped on top of the flat one; this second layer will simply add pressure to the site for the next day so that no bleeding occurs. Occasionally, a small amount of bloody serum will leak out one side of this dressing; this can be easily blotted away. The outer bandage can be removed in 24-36 hours leaving behind a thin one. Keep the site completely dry until the outer bandage is removed. As long as the inner bandage remains in place, you do not have to do anything to the wound. *If the inner bandage falls off prematurely, then follow the directions in A-C below.*

4. If your wound site is located above the shoulders, you should be cautious **not to stoop or bend over** for the next 48 hours. For example, we urge you to lift your foot up to you rather than bending over in order to change or tie your shoes. No lifting, straining, or exercise should be done over the next two days. Any of these activities or anything that rapidly raises your blood pressure will put pressure on the healing blood vessels causing them to bleed. Also, keep your head elevated while sleeping. If the wound is located on the nose, eye or forehead some swelling may occur around the eyelids within 48-72 hours. Ice compresses applied for 10 minutes every half-hour during the first 24 hours after surgery (while awake) will minimize the swelling. Wounds on the lip should also be iced in the same manner.

The following directions should be used ONLY if the inner flat bandage comes off or becomes very loose:

A. **Twice daily**, clean the wound using *Q-tip* swabs dipped in *water*. Gently roll the swabs over the wound rather than harshly wipe the area. Continue using these moistened swabs to *remove any crusted or dried blood* from the site. Care must be taken not to rub the healing wound too firmly. Allow the water and the gentle rolling action to loosen all of the debris. Do not use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol to clean the area. Tissue injury may result.

B. When the wound is clean, gently pat it dry and apply a generous amount of Vaseline or Aquaphor ointment to prevent a scab from forming. ***A scab may impair the healing process.***

C. If the wound is small enough, a Band-Aid will be sufficient covering. If the wound is too large for a Band-Aid, cut a small piece of the *non-stick pad* sufficient to cover the wound. Using paper tape, secure the non-stick pad to the skin. Use as much tape as necessary.

List of Wound Care Materials

1. Water
2. Vaseline (If your wound is on the ear use Neosporin ointment)
3. Telfa (non-adhesive)
4. Paper tape

5. Should you have any bleeding in the perioperative period, simply take a gauze pad, apply it over the bleeding site and hold moderate pressure over this area continuously for 10 minutes. Nearly all bleeding will stop with pressure and a clot should form within this short timeframe. If your bleeding is extensive and does not appear to stop after 10 minutes of continuous pressure, it would be wise to telephone your surgeon.

6. Some wound sites will cause a small to moderate amount of discomfort in the evening after your surgery has been performed. If you have discomfort, please take Tylenol (acetaminophen). *Do not take any aspirin, aspirin containing products, or Advil (ibuprofen) for 48 hours following surgery.* If Tylenol does not subdue your discomfort adequately, we will phone a prescription to your local pharmacy for a stronger pain medication. Also, please don't drink any alcohol or hot drinks for 48 hours following surgery as these can induce bleeding.

7. If you stopped any medications before surgery you may resume them 24 hours after surgery. *Should you have any questions about your postoperative care, or any concerns about the healing wound, please phone our office at 301-564-3131 or 703-204-0000.*

8. You will be reminded to see your referring doctor one year after your surgery. We occasionally ask you to return on a more frequent basis depending upon the type of cancer that is excised.