

## Taking care of your wound after skin surgery

**Step 1** For the next 1 to 2 weeks, gently wash the wound area with soap and water, **at least 3 times per day. Do not use peroxide.**

**Step 2** Remove scabs by gently washing the wound with a washcloth at least 3 times per day. Scabs impair healing and actually cause more scarring.

**Step 3** After washing, apply a thin layer of an antibiotic ointment, or even Vaseline. Do this **10 times per day**, if necessary, to keep the wound moist.

Keep following steps 2 and 3 until there is a layer of skin growing over the wound area.

**Covering up** Try not to cover the treated area (especially the neck and face). However, if the wound is under clothing, apply a Band-Aid so your clothes don't stick to the wound. At night, cover the wound (unless it is on the face) to make sure it doesn't dry out. The ointment is often rubbed away against the bed sheets during sleep.

**Watch for signs of infection** If you see streaks of redness leading away from the wound, it could be infected or you may have an allergy to the antibiotic ointment. If small water blisters and itch-

ing develop, **stop the ointment at once.** You are allergic to it. Use Vaseline where the lesion was removed or ask your pharmacist for an antibiotic ointment without neosporin.

**Healing time** Because a wound created in treating cancer may have "deep holes," it may take 4 to 6 weeks for the area to heal over. It is important to keep the wound constantly moist during this time.

**Pain** If you feel pain, you can put ice on the area or take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin). Avoid aspirin because it can cause bleeding. For Tylenol, take 2 of the 325-mg pills every 4 to 6 hours (but do not exceed 5 doses in 1 day). For Motrin, take 3 of the 200-mg pills 4 times per day as necessary.

**Contact the office** Since a skin lesion can come back, be on the lookout for changes in the area. Please call the office for a follow-up appointment if you notice changes that do not resemble healing. If you haven't heard from us within 2 weeks after surgery, please call us for the report.

Source: John L. Pfenninger, MD, The National Procedures Institute, Midland, Mich.

### NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---