Incision Care After Gastrointestinal (GI) Surgery

An incision is the cut or wound made through your skin during surgery. It is important to take care of the incision to prevent infection and help it to heal. This handout gives you information about what to expect and how to care for the incision when you go home.

- Your incision will be closed with staples, steri-strips (special tape), sutures or surgical glue.

- **Staples** or **sutures** will stay in place for about 10 to 14 days. They will be removed at your first follow-up appointment.

- If you have **steri-strips** over your incision, **do not** remove them; they support the skin as it heals. The steri-strips will come off as the incision heals, or they will be removed at your first follow-up appointment.

- If **surgical glue** was used to close the incision, **do not** soak in water (tub baths, hot tubs, or swimming pools) until your doctor says it is okay. Soaking in water will cause the glue film to come off. The glue usually peels off on its own after about 10 to 14 days.

- Your incisions may be covered with a dressing for the first 24 hours after surgery. Once the dressing is removed, leave the incision uncovered and open to air.

- If you have a small amount of drainage, you can use a band-aid or gauze dressing to cover the area.

- Keep the incision clean and dry.

- You can shower 1 day after your surgery, but **do not** take tub baths, or use hot tubs or swimming pools until your incision has healed. It usually takes about 2 weeks for the incision to heal.

- Wash your incision gently with soap and water. Rinse well with clean water and pat dry with a clean towel.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

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• Do not use oils, powders or lotions on your incision until it is healed.
• Check your incision each day for any signs of infection. **Call your doctor if you have any of the following problems:**
  ■ Redness
  ■ Swelling
  ■ Increased pain
  ■ Foul smelling drainage or an increase in drainage
  ■ Fever of 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit (38.6 degrees Celsius)