Incision Care after Vascular Surgery

It is important to follow this guide for healing after vascular surgery. Your incision or wound will slowly heal after surgery. This handout will tell you what to expect and when to call the doctor if you have questions or concerns.

Daily Wound Care at Home

Removing a Wound Dressing and Caring for the Incision:

- Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds with soap and water. Remove the tape and gauze dressing over your incision site after your surgery.
- Slowly remove the gauze dressing from the edge toward the center.
- You will have either staples or narrow pieces of tape over the incision called steri-strips. Do not remove steri-strips until you are told to do so.
- Clean the incision every day with mild soap. Use a clean wash cloth each time. Rinse well and pat dry. Keep the area clean and dry to prevent infection and help with healing.

Taking a Shower

- Take a shower each day. Do not take tub baths, use hot tubs or swimming pools until your staples are removed and incisions are healed.
- Remove gauze dressing before getting into the shower.
Gently wash incisions with mild soap and water. Rinse well and pat the area dry with a clean, dry towel.

Do not apply lotions, oils or powders to the incision after showering.

**Steri-strips**
- Steri-strips are special pieces of tape that keep the wound closed. Steri-strips will be removed 10 to 14 days after surgery.

**Staples**
- If the incision is closed with staples, they will be removed at the first follow up visit with your surgeon. After staples are removed, steri-strips will be put over the incision at that time. Steri-strips can be removed 10 to 14 days after the staple removal.

**General Information**
- If you have a **groin incision**, keep it covered with a gauze dressing for at least 1 week (7 days) after leaving the hospital.
- Support the incision in the group by gently applying pressure and hold the area when coughing or sneezing.
- If you had surgery on your leg, there may be swelling. **Keep the leg elevated using a footstool or sitting in a recliner chair. At night, the leg should also be elevated with a pillow so that the heel is above the level of your heart.** If swelling does not improve by morning, call the office.
- It is normal for wounds to be sensitive and tender to the touch. You may have tingling and numbness on the inner thigh near the groin incision or along the leg incision. This is from nerves healing in the leg. You can expect feeling to improve over the next 6 to 12 months.
- You may have a thin, watery yellow or some blood in the draining from the groin or leg incision after surgery. This can increase if you have swelling in your leg. You may need to change the dressing 2 times a day to keep the area clean and dry. **If you have to change dressings more than 2 times a day, call the surgeon’s office.**
When to Call the Doctor
If you have any of these signs, call your doctor at (614) 293-8536:

- Fever greater than 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius
- Increase in pain around the wound
- Changes in the amount, color, or odor of drainage from incision sites
- Redness, streaking or warmth at the incision site
- Hard lump or ball that grows at groin site
- **Signs of blood clot**, such as hardness, redness, numbness, tingling or swelling from your groin area to your foot on the leg. If your skin feels cold, or looks bluish in color, call the doctor right away.
- Bleeding at the groin site
- **If you need a refill on your pain medicine**, call the office 48 hours before taking your last pill. Some pain medicines require a written prescription and cannot be called into a pharmacy.
- Call the office if you have any questions or concerns about your healing.

Follow-Up Visit
Your follow up visit will be written in your paperwork when leaving the hospital.

If you do not receive see a follow up visit with your vascular surgeon, please call the office at (614) 293-8536 to schedule the visit.

*Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have any questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email:* [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).