

Wound Healing

In healthy adults and children, it will take approximately 2-3 weeks for your wound to heal. As we get older it takes longer.

If you have health problems, like Diabetes, or are taking certain drugs, such as steroids or Chemotherapy drugs, or you have a weakened Immune system, it may take longer.

Healing of your wound is promoted by keeping it warm, at a constant temperature.

Smoking reduces blood flow to your wound and decreases the oxygen carried in the blood, thus slowing healing.

Wounds in areas of high movement and friction may be slower to heal, eg: hands, knees, feet. Wounds on the face heal better because of the good blood supply.

Healthy Eating

You can help the healing process by eating a nutritious diet, high in Vitamin C (citrus fruits, kiwifruit, rock melon, strawberries, tomatoes, capsicum) and green veggies like broccoli.

Include in your diet moderate amounts of protein and zinc (meat, eggs, fish, seafood, chicken, and milk products).

Poor nutrition slows wound healing and increases the risk of infection.

Drink plenty of water, and consider Vitamin supplements as a healing boost.

Getting Back to Normal

- Gentle activity is good for you, but while your wound is healing, avoid straining it. Also avoid bending, lifting, or being too active.
- Check with your information guide, specific to the operation you had, regarding resuming heavy chores and activities.
- Light exercise, eg: Walking, will help you recover faster and improve circulation.
- Regular pain relief will help reduce the pain at the wound and enable you to move freely.
- Protect your wound from trauma, eg: pressure on the wound, over activity, clothes rubbing, too tight bandages and hot water.
- Scars from surgical wounds can be prone to sunburn, so use sunscreen once healed or keep covered.
- 'Hypafix' dressing applied to your wound once it is healed, will support the incision, and hold skin edges close together, until the wound gains strength.



Excellence in Healthcare

Hospital Road, Blenheim

General Enquiries

P 03 520 9653 | PO Box 351 Blenheim 7240

**E admin@churchillhospital.co.nz
churchillprivatehospital**

www.churchillhospital.co.nz

POST OPERATIVE WOUND CARE

Information for Patients



Excellence in Healthcare

If you have recently had surgery, you may have some questions about caring for your surgical wound.

Care of Your Wound

Keep your wound clean and dry for the first 72 hours. If you have a shower proof dressing covering your wound, you may shower with it as is. This can be removed after 7-10 days.

Elevating the affected limb or body part as much as possible will lessen the swelling and improve healing.

Avoid baths, spas and swimming pools until your wound is healed, or you may get an infection.

Your surgical wound may be closed with:

Stitches:

Some types of stitches will dissolve on their own whilst others will need to be removed by a Nurse 7-10 days after surgery.

Clips:

Stay in for 10-12 days and will need to be removed by a Nurse.

Steri Strips:

Sticky material strips that hold skin edges together. Remove after 7-10 days.

If you go home with a Drain in, make sure to keep it well sealed under a waterproof dressing.

Keep it looped and taped to your skin to avoid pulling. Take care not to disconnect the tubing from the bottle, as it will lose suction, and may introduce infection. You will have instructions for follow-up care.

Dressing Change

You may have instructions to change your wound dressing two days following your operation. Here is a guide to assist you:

Thorough hand washing is the most important factor in avoiding wound infection.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for fifteen seconds and then dry them.
- Remove the soiled dressing and dispose of it into the rubbish.
- Wash and dry your hands again as you did before.
- Clean the wound (if necessary) with gauze wetted with normal saline (1/4 tsp salt in 1/2 cup clean water). Clean the incision first, then the surrounding skin. Dry wound with gauze, then dry the surrounding skin.
- Check wound for signs of infection. It is normal to have some wound ooze for 48 hours after surgery, some redness at the wound margins, tenderness, itching, bruising and some swelling.
- Apply new dressing supplied.

Pain Pump

If you have a pain pump delivering local anaesthetic into your wound, you can remove the fine catheter (once the bulb is empty) at the same time you redress the wound, by gently pulling it out. Discard and redress the wound as above.

Signs and Symptoms of Infection

Call your doctor, if you have any of the following:

- Body temperature over 38°C.
- Chills or fever.
- Increased warmth and swelling, redness spreading out from wound margins, and increased pain in the wound.
- A smelly wound, pus, or more drainage from the wound.
- Sudden, excessive bleeding from the wound.
- A feeling of hardness or fullness around wound or any opening of stitches or clips.

IT IS AN EMERGENCY IF YOUR WOUND BURSTS OPEN.

Cover it with gauze or a clean towel, moistened with clean water or saline. Go to the Hospital Emergency Department immediately.