

If you are expecting the results of a biopsy or an excision and have not heard within 2 weeks, please call our office to inquire. It is our policy that all patients are notified, regardless of results.



Wound Care Instructions

Cryotherapy (Freezing of a growth with liquid nitrogen)

The targeted growth was treated by spraying a cold liquid that evaporates at -321° F (-196° C). The frost creates a blister that will become a scab and may be tender for a few days. The edges of the scab will curl up, indicating that it is beginning to separate from the underlying new skin. Once the scab lifts away, the growth goes along for the ride. Depending on location and the size of the lesion, it may take from 7 – 21 days to complete this process. On thick-skinned areas such as the palms or the soles, you may not see a blister, but it may simply be swollen and dusky. New, “baby” skin is usually very smooth and pink and will gradually blend with the surrounding skin. If the surrounding skin, however, is tanned or sun-damaged, there may be a slight contrast as the new skin has not been exposed to the sun and is therefore lighter in color. The only type of growth that you may try to peel off prematurely would be a wart; otherwise it may try to re-establish itself at the base of the wound. Any blister fluid from a wart should be thoroughly washed as it may contain infectious viral particles. Thick growths and warts may require multiple treatments. If you suspect the lesion is still there, please return for examination and possibly additional treatments after one month.

Shave Removal / Biopsy or Curettage and Desiccation (Scraping and cautery)

These shallow wounds are the result of shaving off a growth (wart, keratosis, mole, etc) or from the treatment of shallow skin cancers through the process of scraping off the tumor and heat cauterization of the base using a blunt electric probe. Generally they are about as deep as finger-nail scratches to skinned-knees. Ideal wound care consists of **daily** cleansing during your bathing routine or rubbing alcohol followed by application of unscented petroleum jelly (Vaseline) and a small bandage. Neosporin is unnecessary and may occasionally cause contact allergy. Delaying the formation of a scab as long as possible results in the best-appearing wound as it prevents the “iceberg” from settling in the middle and inhibiting skin cells from migrating to each other. Once a dry scab has formed, however, daily wound care may cease. See the above tips for dealing with scabs. Total healing time depends on the body location with faces healing as quickly as 10 days to legs taking up to 6 weeks.

Excisions (Cutting out and closing the wound with stitches)

Excisions are often performed to remove tumors that extend deep into the skin or sometimes to achieve the best cosmetic results for shallow lesions. Depending on size and location, some wounds are closed with just superficial stitches and some require an added underlying layer of dissolving sutures for extra strength. Generally, stitches on the face are removed in a week. Neck and scalp sutures are removed in 10 days. Regions below the collarbone require at least 14 days to properly settle before sutures are removed. It is highly recommended to **limit activity for at least one week**. As a rough guide, if your wound feels tight, then you are putting too much tension on the sutures and may result in it becoming undone, bleeding or infected. Just as in shave removals, **daily cleansing** with mild soap and water or rubbing alcohol followed by generous applications of petroleum jelly and a bandage is often all that is required. If you are sensitive to adhesives, then bandages may be customized using non-adherent (“Telfa”) pads followed by gauze and paper tape. **It is critical that you continue daily applications of the petrolatum** as it will accelerate wound healing, improve its cosmetic outcome, and prevent the skin from trying to pull the stitches below the surface. If this occurs, the dry wound must be explored in order to remove the sutures, resulting in discomfort. Pain is best managed with extra-strength Tylenol. Alcohol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen are blood-thinners and may result in bleeding complications. Most bleeding complications occur within the first 48 hours and are usually temporary. Apply firm, steady pressure with gauze for 5 minutes at a time and recheck. Infections, while rare, do not occur before 48 hours. If your dressings are soaking through or the wound is warm, reddened beyond an inch around the incision, swollen, dark, firm, or progressively tender to the touch, do not hesitate to call our office or seek urgent medical attention.