

# Post-Operative Wound Care

## Patient Information Handout

May 2024

### How to care for your wound at home

When you return home after surgery at the Sydney Adventist Hospital (SAH), you may have questions about caring for your wound. This handout will provide you with information on how to look after yourself and your wound so that you can return to optimum health as quickly as possible.

This information should be used in conjunction with any information given to you by your doctor.

### Nutrition and Hydration

Following surgery (unless your doctor has told you otherwise), it is important that you follow a diet high in protein (e.g., meat, nuts, eggs, dairy, soy, legumes, and pulses) with moderate amounts of healthy carbohydrates (e.g., wholegrain bread and cereals) to help your body replace and repair damaged tissue. In addition, consuming a diet rich in essential vitamins and minerals, such as Vitamin A, Zinc, Iron, and Vitamin C (fresh fruits, especially citrus, legumes, cashews, green leafy vegetables, meats and fish, soy and dairy) will aid in your recovery.



Maintain adequate nutrition.

Staying well hydrated is also important and you should consume approximately two litres of fluid (best choice is water) per day.

**Please note:** if you are on dietary or fluid restrictions, seek guidance from your doctor before making any of the above dietary changes.



Stay hydrated

### Rest

Rest and taking things easy is an important part of caring for your wound. A healing wound uses a lot of the body's energy.



Get plenty of rest

### Medications

If you are prescribed antibiotics by your doctor, please take them as directed and complete the entire course.

### Attending to your wound

- **Wash your hand regularly**  
When changing your dressing or touching near your wound *always* wash your hands before and after doing so. Use soap (liquid soap is best) and warm water to thoroughly wash your hands (washing all surfaces of your hands and under the nails for at least one minute). Be sure to dry your hands with a clean towel.
- **Avoid scratching, itching, and irritating your wound**

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- **Avoid use of creams, lotions, and powders**  
Avoid use of creams, lotions, and powders on your wound *unless* you have been specifically told to use a certain type on your wound by your doctor.



Did you know that hand washing is the single most important step in controlling the spread of infection?

- **Keep your wound dry**  
If you are showering with an exposed wound *always pat the wound dry* with a freshly laundered, clean towel or a piece of clean kitchen roll kept just for this purpose. Ensure clean towels are not placed on the bathroom floor or toilet seat/lid prior to use. Swimming or having a bath is not advisable until your wound has fully healed.
- **If you have been told to “keep your dressing intact”, you should have received specific instructions when discharged.**  
If you haven't been told or don't remember, please feel free to contact the ward from which you were discharged, to ask for specific instructions. Sydney Adventist Hospital switchboard telephone number is (02) 9480 9111.
- **Be conscious of who or what is near your wound**  
Things such as pets or animals, babies, soiled linen, clothing, and other medical devices (such as drains and urinary catheters) can pose a big infection risk. Changing underwear or clothing daily that comes into contact with your wound is strongly advised.

- **Observe your wound and the surrounding skin**  
You may need a mirror to help you with this. Look for signs of infection as outlined in this handout. Please seek medical advice as soon as possible if you are concerned about your wound.

### Signs of wound infection

If you have a wound infection, you may have one or more of the following signs or symptoms:

- Increased pain
- Redness, swelling and/or warm/hot to touch
- Increased bleeding
- Lots of wound discharge (may or may not be offensive smelling)
- Generally feeling unwell
- Increased temperature – feeling hot or cold
- Delayed wound healing (your wound is just not getting better)
- Wound breakdown, wound breaking open or starting to separate

**Note:** *Diabetes, obesity, smoking, malnutrition, immune deficiencies, and some medications may affect the progress of your wound healing.*

### What to do?

If you are concerned, you have a wound infection:

- Contact your surgeon
- Visit your GP or nearest medical centre,
- If you're feeling very unwell, please present to Emergency Care (SAH Emergency Department is open 24/7). Emergency Contact (02) 9480 9000

### Contact Us

For further information, please call us on **(02) 9480 9111** or visit our website at **[www.sah.org.au](http://www.sah.org.au)**