

Wound care

After surgery, you will need to take care of the incision as it heals. Doing so may limit scarring, may help you avoid pain or discomfort, and may help lower the risk of problems like infection.

Your doctor used either stitches, staples, tissue glue, or tape strips to close the incision. And you will need to keep the area clean, change the dressing according to your doctor's instructions, and watch for signs of infection.

Plan Ahead

- **Plan a ride home.** Ask a family member or friend to bring you home after your hospital visit and stay with you for 24 hours.
- **Plan for meals.** Good nutrition is important for your recovery, but cooking may be harder to do right after you get home. Prepare and freeze meals before your surgery or ask friends and family to help you cook or shop for groceries.
- **Get help with chores.** After you get home you may need help. For a short time after your surgery, you may be told to avoid certain physical activities. Plan ahead and arrange to have some help with chores after your surgery.
- **Buy gum or hard candies.** Chewing gum and sucking on hard candies may help get your bowels moving after surgery.

Be as healthy as possible

- **Be active.** Being active before surgery will make it easier for you to be active after surgery. If you're normally active, keep doing your regular activities up to the day of your surgery. If you aren't used to exercising, start slowly. You can start by going for 15 minute walks.
- **Eat healthy.** Eating healthy foods will give your body the nutrients it needs to prepare for and handle the surgery. Eat healthy foods and drink enough fluids in the weeks before your surgery. Your healthcare team will tell you how long before surgery that you need to stop eating and drinking.
- **Manage your medical conditions.** If you have other medical conditions, such as anemia or high or low blood sugar, ask your healthcare team what you need to do to prepare for surgery.
- **Quit tobacco.** You can heal faster and prevent lung problems after surgery if you quit tobacco. Aim to quit smoking and using tobacco and tobacco-like products at least 4 weeks before surgery. Talk to your healthcare team about ways to quit or cut back.
- **Don't drink alcohol 24 hours before surgery.** Alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs may interact with medicines you take before and after surgery. Talk to your healthcare team if you need help stopping or cutting back on alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs.

Do the following before your surgery to help you feel better sooner and recover faster.

The day before surgery

- Know the time of your surgery, when you need to be at the hospital, and where you need to go when you get there.
- Follow any instructions the healthcare team or your surgeon gave you for your medicines (including herbal or complementary medicines).
- Don't drink alcohol 24 hours before your surgery.



- **Stop** eating at midnight. This is very important!



Stop eating and drinking all non-clear fluids at midnight. This is very important

- You may DRINK CLEAR FLUIDS ONLY up to 3 hours before surgery. This includes BLACK coffee, tea, Gatorade, apple juice and water.

Morning of surgery

Plan to arrive at the hospital on time.

- Follow any instructions provided
- Bring all of the things you packed for your hospital stay **if** you are being admitted.
- Follow **all** other instructions the healthcare team gave you to prepare for surgery.
- Bring your CPAP if you use one



Tips for reducing the risk of infection

To reduce the risk of infection:

Keep the area dry and clean for at least 24-48hrs. Follow your doctor's instructions exactly.

- Look at the incision every day, checking for signs of infection (see below).
- Change the dressing as your doctor recommends.

Do **not**:

- Scrub or rub incisions.
- Remove the tape strips (such as Steri-Strips) from incisions unless your doctor tells you to.
- Use lotion or powder on incisions.

- Expose incisions to sunlight.
- Take a bath unless you can keep the incision dry. Instead, take showers or sponge baths until your doctor says it's okay to take baths. Before you shower, cover the dressing with a plastic bag or use another method of keeping it dry.

You may notice some soreness, tenderness, tingling, numbness, and itching around the incision. There may also be mild oozing and bruising, and a small lump may form. This is normal and no cause for concern.

Signs of infection

Call your doctor if you notice signs of an infection, such as:

- A yellow or green discharge that is increasing.
- A change in the odour of the discharge.
- A change in the size of the incision.
- Redness or hardening of the surrounding area.
- The incision is hot to the touch.
- Fever.
- Increasing or unusual pain.
- Excessive bleeding that has soaked through the dressing.

Changing a dressing

Before you start, make sure you have gauze pads, a box of medical gloves, surgical tape, a plastic bag, and scissors. Then:

1. Prepare supplies by opening the gauze packages and cutting new tape strips.
2. Wash and dry your hands. Put on medical gloves.
3. Loosen the tape around the old dressing.
4. Remove the old dressing.
5. Clean the incision if your doctor told you to do so. (See instructions below.)
6. Inspect the incision for signs of infection.
7. Hold a clean, sterile gauze pad by the corner and place over the incision.
8. Tape all four sides of the gauze pad.
9. Put all trash in a plastic bag. Remove your gloves last.
10. Seal plastic bag and throw it away.
11. Wash your hands.

Cleaning an incision

To clean the incision:

- Gently wash it with soap and water to remove the crust.
- Do not scrub or soak the wound.
- Do not use rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or iodine, which can harm the tissue and slow wound healing.
- Air-dry the incision or pat it dry with a clean, fresh towel before reapplying the dressing.

Caring for stitches, staples, tissue glue, or adhesive strips

Stitches or staples normally cause some redness and swelling where the stitch enters the skin, along with mild irritation and itching. Some drainage from the incision may be expected for the first few days after surgery. But if the discharge does not decrease after a few days, becomes bright red with blood, or contains pus, contact your doctor.

The incisions may be protected with tissue glue or small adhesive strips (such as Steri-Strips) instead of a dressing or bandage. If glue was used, be sure to dry the incision area right away if it gets wet. The glue will fall off on its own after a bit of time. If adhesive strips were used, leave them in place until they become loose or fall off on their own.



Other incision care tips

After some surgeries, you may be given special instructions other than these for taking care of the incision. Be sure to follow those instructions carefully. If you are confused by the instructions or you have a question, call your doctor's office. If the office is closed, leave a message with the answering service. If your pain has increased or you suspect you may have an infection, call your doctor as soon as possible.

Don't expose your incision to direct sun for 3 to 9 months after surgery. As an incision heals, the new skin that is formed over the cut is very sensitive to sunlight and will burn more easily than normal skin. Bad scarring could occur if you get sunburn on this new skin.

Discharge

How you may feel after your operation

- You may feel nauseated, light headed dizzy or sleepy for up to 24 hours after your surgery
- You may have a slight temperature for 2 days

- You may feel tired for a few days after your surgery

For 24 hours after your surgery do not....

- Drive a vehicle
- Operate heavy equipment
- Drink alcohol or smoke
- Make any important or legal decisions

At Home

Slowly get more active.

- Eat healthy and drink fluids as you did before surgery (unless your healthcare team gives you other instructions).
- Drink oral nutritional supplements (like Ensure Protein Max) for the first month after surgery to give you extra protein and help you heal faster.
- Take less pain medicine as your pain gets better.
- Take your blood thinner and other medicines as you were told.

What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia controls pain. And it keeps all your organs working normally during surgery or another kind of procedure.

Anesthesia can relax you. It can also make you sleepy or forgetful. Or it may make you unconscious. It depends on what kind you get.

Your anesthesia provider (anesthesiologist) will make sure you are comfortable and safe during the procedure or surgery.

There are different types of anesthesia.

- **Local anesthesia.** This type numbs a small part of the body. Doctors use it for simple procedures.
 - You get a shot in the area the doctor will work on.
 - You will feel some pressure during the procedure.
 - You may stay awake. Or you may get medicine to help you relax or sleep.
- **Regional anesthesia.** This type blocks pain to a larger area of the body. It can also help relieve pain right after surgery. And it may reduce your need for other pain medicine after surgery. There are different types. They include:
 - Peripheral nerve block. This is a shot near a specific nerve or group of nerves. It blocks pain in the part of the body supplied by the nerve. This is often used for procedures on the hands, arms, feet, legs, or face.

- Epidural and spinal anesthesia. This is a shot near the spinal cord and the nerves around it. It blocks pain from an entire area of the body, such as the belly, hips, or legs.
- **General anesthesia.** This type affects the brain and the whole body. You may get it through a small tube placed in a vein (IV). You are unconscious and will not feel pain. During the surgery, you will be comfortable. Later, you will not remember much about the surgery.

What type will you have?

The type of anesthesia you have depends on many things, such as:

- The type of surgery or procedure and the reason you are having it.
- Test results, such as blood tests.
- How worried you feel about the surgery.
- Your health. Your doctor and nurses will ask you about any past surgeries. They will ask about any health problems you may have, such as diabetes, lung or heart disease, or a history of stroke. They will want to know if you take medicine, such as blood thinners. Your doctor may also ask if any family members have had any problems with anesthesia. You will talk with your anesthesia provider about your options. In many cases, you may be able to choose the type of anesthesia you have.

What can you expect after having anesthesia?

Right after the surgery, you will be in the recovery room. Nurses will make sure you are comfortable. As the anesthesia wears off, you may feel some pain and discomfort from your surgery.

Tell someone if you have pain. Pain medicine works better if you take it before the pain gets bad.

You may feel some of the effects of anesthesia for a while. It takes time for the effects of the medicine to completely wear off.

- If you had local or regional anesthesia you may feel numb and have less feeling in part of your body. It may also take a few hours for you to be able to move and control your muscles as usual.
- When you first wake up from general anesthesia, you may be confused. Or it may be hard to think clearly. This is normal.
- Don't do anything for 24 hours that requires attention to detail. This includes going to work, making important decisions, or signing any legal documents.

Other common side effects of anesthesia include:

- Nausea and vomiting. This does not usually last long. It can be treated with medicine.
- A slight drop in body temperature. You may feel cold and shiver when you first wake up.
- A sore throat, if you had general anesthesia.
- Muscle aches or weakness.
- Feeling tired.

You may go home the same day of surgery or you may stay in the hospital. Your doctor will check on your recovery from the anesthesia. He or she will answer any questions you may have.

For answers to frequently asked questions about your anesthetic, please visit <https://www.cas.ca/en/about-cas/advocacy/anesthesia-faq>