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Care of your surgical wound at home

In many cases surgical incisions heal quickly and should only require dressings for a short period of time; but some patients heal slower. To reduce the risk of complications you will be given specific instructions for your wound care, you may also be referred to your GP or Community Nurse for wound care.

Hand Hygiene is extremely important if you are attending to your own dressings or your wounds are being attended to by Medical staff. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds, then rinse and dry hands thoroughly before commencing wound dressing. The wound should be inspected for any redness, swelling, fluid and drainage of blood. Any separation of the wound edges or odour from the wound is an indication that there may be an infection. Some swelling can be normal and it usually settles within two weeks. If any of these signs are present contact your GP or Surgeon for advice.

Antibiotics may be prescribed, if so the complete course should be taken. Contact your Doctor if you have an allergic reaction to the medication and stop taking it immediately. Severe allergic reactions occur within a short period of time after taking the medication or exposure to the allergen. Common symptoms of an allergic reaction include: hives, itching, rash and watery eyes. Symptoms of a moderate or severe reaction include: chest discomfort or tightness, cough, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, redness/swelling of the face, eyes or tongue, nausea or vomiting, heart palpitations, wheezing and unconsciousness.

For a severe allergic reaction (Anaphylaxis) check the person's airway, breathing and circulation. (Basic Life Support "BSL"). A warning sign of severe allergic reaction is throat swelling, a very hoarse or whispered voice and coarse sounds when the person is breathing. Seek urgent medical attention and call 000.

Showering and Bathing you will be given instructions after your procedure for showering/bathing normally, you may be required to keep your wound dry. If you are unsure consult your Surgeon or Nurse for specific instructions. After stitches, steri-strips or clips have been removed you can usually shower normally.

Medications you may be required to stop blood thinning medications prior to your operation. If so the Doctor will instruct you when to cease the medication; also it is important to check with your Doctor when you should restart your normal medications/blood thinning medications.

Elevation and Compression you may be given instructions to elevate the limb. This will assist in reducing the swelling and pain. If you have an incision on your leg lie down with your leg above the level of your heart. Your Doctor may give you instructions to wear compression stockings to control the swelling. You may have to wear continuous compression or you may be able to remove compression at night. Ask for instructions specific to you.

Nutrition A balanced diet is important for healing.

Constipation some painkilling medications may cause constipation so eat foods high in fibre, fresh fruit and drink plenty of water. You may need laxatives, if so ask your Doctor for advice.

Smoking will lead to reduced blood supply and affect the healing of your wound.

Please contact North Coast Vascular if you have any of the following:

- ***Fever above 38°***
- ***Heavy oozing or bleeding from the wound***
- ***Increased swelling or pain, foul odour***
- ***Any concerns about your surgery***

For more information or advice, please contact Christine (Practice Nurse) on 6621 2200 or Christine@ncvascular.com.au

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North Coast Radiology Building
93 Tamar Street

LISMORE
St Vincent's Medical Suites
Level 1, 20 Dalley Street

MACLEAN
Clarence Valley Imaging Building
52 River Street

TWEED HEADS
Advanced Health & Chiropractic
26 Minjungbal Drive