



University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Abrons Student Health Center

## INSTRUCTION SHEET: SUTURED WOUND

The Student Health Provider has closed your laceration (cut) with sutures (stitches). Sutures keep the wound edges together until the body seals the cut permanently. Your sutures, like most sutures placed in the skin, need to be removed (they do not dissolve).

Realize that the provider has checked (by questions and/or inspection) for foreign bodies in your wound. Sometimes, foreign bodies are difficult to detect during initial evaluation.

### MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR SUTURED WOUND:

1. Keep the wound clean.
2. Keep the wound dry except for daily brief showering. Do not immerse the wound in water, as in bathing, swimming, or dishwashing.
3. If the wound is on an arm or leg, elevate the area above the level of your heart. Elevating the area the first 24 to 48 hours minimizes swelling and pain.
4. Over-the-counter pain medications can help relieve discomfort associated with a wound. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
5. Change the dressing daily: Gently remove the old dressing. Clean the area with liquid hand soap and water. Use Q-tips or a piece of clean gauze/cloth to gently remove debris and crusting from the wound area. Apply a small amount of over-the-counter antibacterial ointment, and cover the wound with a gauze dressing. You can also leave the wound open to air for a few hours before applying the new dressing — do so only if you will not be active, doing anything that might get the wound dirty.
6. When you change the dressing, inspect the wound for signs of infection: pus draining from the wound, increasing redness/swelling/warmth around the wound, or red streaks spreading from the wound. If you suspect infection is present, return to the Student Health Center or see another medical provider *promptly*.
7. If the wound bleeds enough to soak the dressing: Remove the dressing and apply direct, firm pressure to the cut with a clean cloth or gauze. Keep pressure on the wound for 15 minutes. If the bleeding stops, reapply a clean dressing. If bleeding continues after pressure or soaks a new dressing, return to the Student Health Center or see another medical provider promptly.
8. Return to the Student Health Center or see your personal/referral doctor in \_\_\_\_\_ days for suture removal. Weekday mornings (8 to 10 AM) are the best times to return for suture removal: The Student Health Center is usually less busy and your wait time will be shorter.
9. If you have the sensation of a persistent foreign body in the wound, or any concern about your wound long-term, return to the Student Health Center for re-evaluation.