Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How to Care for Your Wound With Vinegar Soaks After Your Skin Procedure

This information explains how to care for your wound with vinegar soaks after your skin procedure with the MSK Dermatology Service.

Caring for your wound after your skin procedure helps prevent infection. It can also help you heal with little pain or discomfort.

Caring for your wound at home

- Leave the bandage on your wound for _____ hours after your procedure. Keep it clean and dry.
- Take off your bandage after _____ hours.
- Your care team may have told you to ice your wound. If they did, put an ice pack on it for 15 to 20 minutes every hour you're awake. Place the ice pack over the bandage. Do not use the ice pack without it being covered by a bandage..
- Do this for the first 24 to 48 hours (1 to 2 days) after your procedure. It will help lessen bleeding, pain, and swelling.
- You can shower _____ hours after your procedure.
    - Let the shower stream run gently over your wound. Do not aim the shower stream at your wound.
    - Pat your wound dry with a clean gauze pad or clean, dry washcloth. Do not rub your wound.
- Do not take a bath, go swimming, or go into a hot tub until your care team

tells you it's OK.

Cleaning your wound

Clean your wound every day. Do this for _____ days/weeks after your procedure, or until your follow-up appointment. Follow the instructions below when you clean your wound.

Supplies

You will need the following supplies to clean your wound:

- 1 (8-ounce) cup of water
- 1 tablespoon of white vinegar
- 3 gauze pads, 1 for soaking and 2 for drying
- Clean, dry washcloth
- 1 package of cotton swabs (such as Q-tips®)
- _____ ointment
- Scissors
- 1 adhesive bandage (such as Band-aid®), cut to fit the size of your wound. You can also use 1 nonstick gauze pad with paper tape.

Instructions for cleaning your wound

1. Gather your supplies.
2. Make a vinegar solution. Mix 1 (8-ounce) cup of water and 1 tablespoon of white vinegar in a clean container with a lid. This does not need to be sterile.
3. Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
    - If you're washing your hands with soap and water, wet your hands and apply soap. Rub your hands together for 20 seconds, then rinse. Dry your hands with a paper towel and use that same towel to turn off the faucet.
    - If you're using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, be sure to cover your hands with it. Then, rub your hands together until they're dry.

4. Clean your wound with soap and water. Pat dry with gauze. Do not rub.
5. Soak a gauze pad with vinegar solution. Then, place the soaked gauze pad on the wound and leave it there for 2 minutes.
6. After 2 minutes, take off the soaked gauze pad.
7. Gently pat your wound dry with a clean gauze pad or clean, dry washcloth. Do not rub the area.
8. Use cotton swabs to put _____ ointment on your wound.
9. Cover your wound with nonstick gauze or an adhesive bandage (Band-aid) that's been cut to fit your wound size. If you use nonstick gauze, keep it in place with paper tape.
10. When you're done, wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. You can also use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer instead.
11. Put the vinegar solution in the refrigerator in a container with a lid. You can store it in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Follow these instructions for _____ days/weeks or until your healthcare provider tells you to stop.

More instructions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Managing pain after your procedure

You may have pain or discomfort after your procedure. To help with this, take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or extra-strength acetaminophen (Extra Strength Tylenol®).

- Do not take aspirin or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve®). These medicines make it harder for your blood to clot. This can make you bleed more.
- Follow the dose directions on the package for how much medicine you take. If the dose does not help with your pain, call your care team.
- You may be allergic to acetaminophen or cannot take it because of a health condition. If so, ask your care team what you can take instead.
- If you're in a cancer treatment clinical trial, ask your oncologist (cancer doctor) about what pain medicines you can take.

You can also hold an ice pack over your wound to help with pain, swelling, and bruising. Place an ice pack on your wound for 15 to 20 minutes every hour, or follow your care team's instructions.

Bleeding and bruising after your procedure

- You may have swelling and bruising after your procedure. This often goes away after _____ days.
- If you have bleeding, press firmly on your wound with a clean gauze pad for _____ minutes. You can also use a cold compress to help reduce the bleeding. Wet a clean washcloth or clean gauze pad in cold water to make the compress.
- **If your wound is above your neck**: Apply pressure to the site. Make sure your wound site is above the level of your heart. If you're lying down, use pillows to raise your head.
- **If your wound is on your arm or leg**: Apply pressure to the site and raise your arm or leg above your chest level.

If the bleeding does not stop after applying pressure, call your care team at _____.

Activities at home

- Do not do strenuous (heavy) exercise, such as running, for _____ weeks after your procedure.
- Ask your care team when you can lift objects heavier than 10 pounds (2.3 kilograms). You may be able to do this soon after your procedure. Or, you may need to wait until it's safe for you.
- Check with your care team before starting any physical activity such as running, jogging, or lifting weights.
- **If your skin procedure was on our your neck, face, back, or scalp**: Limit how often you bend at your waist until your sutures are removed. Your care team nay tell you to wait for _____ weeks.
- Your wound must not be submerged (kept under water). Do not take a bath, swim, or use a hot tub until your wound has fully healed.

Sleeping after your procedure

- **If your skin procedure was above your neck**: Sleep with your head and shoulders halfway between lying flat and sitting upright (a 45-degree angle). You can do this by sleeping with 2 pillows under your head. Do this for the first _____ days after your procedure.
- **If your skin procedure was on your arm or leg**: Sleep with that body part raised above the level of your heart. You can do this by resting your arm or leg on pillows.
- Ask your care team if you need to do the following for the first 48 hours (2 days) after your procedure:
    - Avoid lying on your wound.
    - Avoid putting any pressure on your wound.
    - Doing this can help with irritation and bleeding.

Healing process

You may have discoloration (pinkness or redness) at the site of your wound. This can last for up to 1 year after your procedure. Some people may have it for even longer.

Once your wound has healed, put a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 on the area. This will help protect the scar from sun exposure.

Taking out your sutures

- You may have non-dissolvable sutures. These are sutures that do not go away on their own. If so, you will need to go back to your doctor's office to have them taken out. Schedule your suture removal appointment in _____ days/weeks.
- If you have dissolvable sutures, they will dissolve (go away) on their own. This may take up to 1 or 2 months.
- Keep checking your sutures until they're dissolved. They may look like a small piece of clear or white string at your wound. If the sutures are not bothering you, let them dissolve completely. Call your care team if you feel any pain or discomfort around your sutures.

When to call your healthcare provider:

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of the following:

- A fever of 100.4° F (38 ° C) or higher.
- Chills (feeling cold and shivering).
- Any of these symptoms at your wound or the area around it:
    - Redness or swelling that's getting worse.
    - Pain or discomfort that's getting worse.
    - Skin that's hard, warm, or hot to the touch.
    - Bright yellow or green drainage (fluid).

- Bleeding that does not stop after putting pressure on the area for 30 minutes.
- Bad odor (smell).
- The wound looks like it has opened.
- Rash.
- Blistering.
- Drainage that goes through your bandage.

- Any questions, concerns, or problems you did not expect.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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