



Brigham and Women's Hospital
Founding Member, Mass General Brigham

Important Reminders After Spine Surgery



**HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL**



Neurosurgery Spine Post-Op Incision Care:

When leaving the hospital your incision may be covered with a dressing, if that is the case, the dressing should be removed THREE days after surgery.

The top layer of your incision is closed in one of three ways, with sutures, (a black nylon thread), steri strips, (white pieces of tape), or with derma bond (a glue-like material that can appear to be purple in color).

REGARDLESS OF HOW YOUR INCISION IS CLOSED, THE FOLLOWING APPLIES:

- Showering is allowed FOUR days after your surgery.
- No direct water pressure on your incision. Water/shampoo may run down over the incision. Do not touch, and or scrub your incision while showering. Pat your incision to dry after your shower. Do not recover your incision, (leave the incision open to air).
- Do not submerge your incision in a tub, pool, ocean/body of water until your clinician sees your incision.
- Make sure you or a support person can monitor your incision.

Steri Strips (white cloth pieces of tape)

- If you have steri strips over your incision, they will likely fall off on their own. If the steri strips are still in place beyond 10 days after surgery, you may gently remove them after you shower.

Sutures (usually black in color, nylon thread)

- Sutures should be removed between 10-14 days after your surgery. Please make sure you have a follow-up appointment that is 10–14 days after your surgery. If you do not you must call the office.

Derma Bond

- Derma Bond is a glue-like material. It may appear purple in color. If the top layer of your incision has glue on it there is nothing to do other than monitor your incision. The glue will slowly wear off post-operatively

Reasons to Call the Office

- If you notice an increase in swelling, redness, and or warmth at your incision site.
- If you notice your incision is draining and or opening.
- These concerns can usually be resolved by reaching out to your surgeon's office and forwarding a picture.
- If time allows, try to take a picture of your incision prior to leaving so you have a baseline to use as a guide.
- Make sure you or a support person can monitor your incision.

Important Things to Remember Once You Are Discharged

- **No Excessive, Repetitive, Extreme, BLT**, (bending, lifting, twisting), listen to your body.
- No lifting more than 10 pounds for the first 2 weeks, gradually increase what you are lifting week to week, and cut back if you are experiencing pain.
- You may shower four days after surgery, if you have a Band-aid/dressing, remove it three days after surgery, not the white steri strips, do **NOT** recover your incision for your shower or after your shower. The white steri strips will likely fall off on their own between days 5 - 10 post-op. If they do not fall off by 10-14 days post-op, you may remove them. When showering, allow the soap and water to run over the incision. Avoid direct water pressure on the incision site. Do not scrub the incision. Pat incision to dry.
- Try your best to be up in a chair/out of bed during the day.
- Take short frequent walks, every hour or so.
- Ice will be helpful to decrease swelling at the incision site.
- For Fusion patients, we ask that you try not to use NSAIDS (i.e. Motrin, Advil, Aleve) for three months post-op, but it is ok if needed.
- Avoid smoking cigarettes for the best post-op recovery, especially if you have had a fusion.
- Your pain medication will cause constipation, you should take something for your bowels once you are home. **DO NOT WAIT.**
- If you need a refill on your pain medication you must call the office two or three days BEFORE you run out of medication.
- Tylenol will be helpful after surgery to control your pain.
- Make sure to confirm your follow-up appointment in Patient Gateway.
- Get your rest and follow a healthy diet that includes protein for healing.
- If you have any questions regarding your recovery, please reach out to your surgeon's office.

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