



Nanaimo

Division of Family Practice

A GPSC initiative

WOUND CARE PATIENT SELF-MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

YOUR GUIDE TO WOUND CARE

SURGICAL WOUNDS

THE PROGRAM

This booklet will help you

- Manage your wound at home
- Improve and maintain your health and quality of life
- Prevent new wounds.

You can use this booklet and the accompanying passport to:

- Keep track of information about your care
- Guide your day-to-day wound care
- Know when you need to call your GP, Home Care Nurse and/or Specialist
- Ensure that your wound is being managed in the best way possible

Your team looks forward to working with
YOU to Heal/Take Control of Your Wound.



You have developed some personal goals, and your passport is your tool to keeping track of them, and of your care, as you begin managing your wound at home.

To heal your wound you will need to take care of yourself and pay attention to your body, but it does not mean you need to stop doing the things you love to do, and this booklet is here to help!

Keep this booklet and your passport nearby, in a convenient spot, so you can refer to them and make notes about your healing journey. It helps to know a bit more about your particular wound.

SUGICAL WOUND

You have a wound from your surgical procedure. The size of the incision will depend on the kind of surgery you had.

There are **two types** of surgical wounds:

A **closed surgical wound** is a wound that is healing properly after your surgery. If you have a closed surgical wound, please follow directions given by surgeon or health care professional.

An **open surgical wound** may have been left open intentionally after surgery. Some surgical wounds open because of infection. Others open because of factors affecting healing such as smoking, obesity, poor nutrition, and certain medications or cancer treatments. It may open along the entire cut, or just part of it. Once a wound has opened, your doctor may decide to let the wound heal from the inside out. If this happens, you will most likely be referred to Home Care Services, in which a nurse cares for your wound.

HOW TO HELP HEAL

There are things you can do every day to help your surgical wound to heal:

1. Do **NOT wear tight clothing** against the incision. Avoid friction and trauma to your incision.
2. **Keep your incision covered with clean, dry dressings.** (Your nurse will teach you how.)
3. **Eat a balanced diet**, high in protein, which keeps your skin strong and helps wounds heal. If you are having difficulty with eating after surgery, your health care team can help you increase your protein.
4. **If you smoke, QUIT!** It's bad for blood flow, your skin, and your body. Your team will talk to you about options that will help you kick the habit! It's truly one of the best things you can do for your body at any age. For more information please visit www.quitnow.ca

CARING FOR YOUR WOUND

Here are the steps you'll need to take to properly care for your wound:

PREPARE

- Get your supplies together and clean a work surface with plenty of room

WASH HANDS

- Remove all jewelry and point hands down, under warm water
- Add soap and wash for 15 to 30 seconds, cleaning under your nails
- Rinse and dry well with a clean towel

REMOVING DRESSING

- Carefully loosen the dressing and pull off gently
- If the dressing sticks, soak it off with saline.
- Put old dressing in a plastic bag and set aside
- Wash your hands AGAIN

INSPECT

- Inspect wound for any drainage, redness, pain or swelling

CLEAN WOUND

- Fill the syringe with recommended fluid
- Hold 3 to 4 inches away from the wound and spray gently
- Use a soft, dry cloth or piece of gauze to pat the wound dry
- Ask physician / health care provider if showering permitted

APPLY DRESSING

- Place and secure the clean dressing onto your wound
- **Remember, use a dressing only ONCE, and never reuse**

FINISH

- Throw used supplies into waterproof, tightly closed, double plastic bag
- Wash your hands AGAIN
- Wash any soiled laundry separately

SIGNS OF TROUBLE

Your wound will change throughout the healing process. Changing your dressing gives you a chance to take a closer look at your wound.

Call your nurse if you see the following changes:

- Redness, pain, swelling, or bleeding occurs
- The wound is larger or deeper
- The wound looks dried out or dark
- The drainage coming from the wound is increasing
- The drainage coming from the wound becomes thick, tan, green or yellow, or smells bad (pus)
- Your temperature is above 100 °F (37.8 °C) for more than 2 hours

RED FLAGS

IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE, CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM IMMEDIATELY!

- Your temperature is above 100 °F (37.8 °C) for more than 4 hours
- You have difficulty breathing
- You feel confused
- You have fever, chills, or light-headedness
- Your wound is bleeding and does NOT stop

HOW DO I KNOW MY WOUND IS HEALING?

Here are a few scenarios that will help you to judge how your healing is progressing:

Your wound may look very similar to the last dressing change. There is no redness, inflammation, pain, bleeding and the discharge looks the same. Your wound may look smaller and the discharge may be less.

SAFE! Your wound is healthy.

Your wound looks larger or deeper. There is some redness and it looks swollen. There is no bleeding but the discharge is different, or this is more than usual.

CAUTION! Your wound may be in trouble, call your nurse.

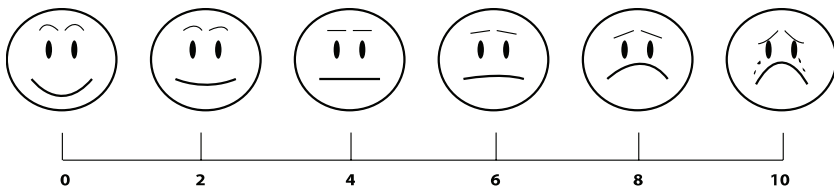
Your wound looks much larger or deeper. There is redness, swelling, and bleeding that isn't stopping. The discharge is very different or there is much more of it. You have pain and a fever.

DANGER! Call your nurse or follow up with your primary care provider. If there is an emergency, call 911.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Please note the following daily activities

- Check your dressing daily. Ensure your dressing is dry and stable. Check to see if a dressing change is required.
- Inspect your skin and body.
- Assess your wound for any changes daily or with each dressing change.
- Eat three meals a day based on Canada's Food Guide.
- Assess how you generally feel today.
- Follow your exercise plan.
- Assess your pain level. The scale below may help you to assess your pain level. You may review this with your nurse at appointments.



MY DRESSING CHANGE

Keep the following list handy and use it to help you remember the types of dressings you will use for your wound and when to change your dressings.

I CHANGE MY DRESSINGS (i.e. daily, weekly, etc.): _____

I CLEAN MY WOUND WITH: _____

THE 1ST DRESSING I APPLY: _____

THE 2ND DRESSING I APPLY: _____

THE 3RD DRESSING I APPLY: _____

I WILL CALL MY NURSE: _____

IF MY DRESSING LEAKS: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Use this worksheet to record important numbers and information while you manage your wound at home.

My Nurse's Name: _____

Office Number: _____

My Care Coordinator: _____

Office Number: _____

My Physician: _____

Office Number: _____

NOTES



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