



An Affiliate of Anne Arundel Dermatology

Postoperative Wound Care

First 48 Hours

- Leave the **pressure bandage** in place and **keep it dry**.
- If the dressing loosens, carefully re-tape it.
- Keep the area **elevated** and **avoid lying** on that side.
- **No alcohol** for 48 hours.

After 48 Hours

- You may shower and Remove the bandage and gently cleanse the surgical site with lukewarm water and mild, fragrance-free soap (e.g., Cetaphil or Dove). Do not scrub the wound. Pat dry with a clean towel.
- Using a clean Q-tip, apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly (Vaseline) or Mupiricon (if prescribed) twice daily to keep the wound moist, unless your surgeon prescribed a specific ointment. **Do not** use fingers or Neosporin, as it may cause allergic reactions.
- Cover with a **Telfa pad (non-stick pad) and hypoallergenic tape**.
- Keep the wound moist: Do not let the wound dry out or form a scab, as this slows healing and increases scarring. Continue this routine until your follow-up appointment (typically 7-14 days) or as directed.

Managing Pain and Swelling

- You may take Extra Strength Tylenol (500 mg), 1–2 tablets every 4–6 hours as directed by your physician, provided you have no allergy to Tylenol (acetaminophen) and no history of liver disease.
- If additional pain relief is needed, ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) may also be used at your surgeon's discretion.
- Please contact our office if your pain is not adequately controlled or if you experience any concerning symptoms such as increasing redness, swelling, or drainage.
- Avoid **Aspirin** (unless prescribed for other conditions), and **supplements such as Vitamin E, and Ginseng** as these may increase bleeding. **Do not** stop prescribed blood thinners (e.g., warfarin, Plavix, Eliquis) unless directed by your doctor.
- Apply an **ice pack** over the bandage for 20 minutes every hour while awake (first 24 hours). **Do Not** place ice directly on the skin.
- Elevation can also help with swelling for surgeries on the extremities.
- If pain worsens after 48 hours, **call our office at 910-251-9944 option 3**.

Bleeding

- Minor oozing, discharge, or slight blood on the bandage is normal. Mild bleeding between sutures is normal.
- If heavy bleeding occurs, apply firm, continuous pressure with clean gauze for 30 minutes without peeking. A wrapped ice pack may help.
- Persistent bleeding: If bleeding continues after 30 minutes, repeat pressure for another 30 minutes.
- If bleeding persists, **call the office immediately at 910-251-9944** to reach the Physician on call. If you believe this is a life-threatening emergency, **go to the nearest Emergency Room or call 911**.

Special Wound Care Instructions

If You Have a Skin Graft

- Leave the **pressure dressing** for 48 hours.
- After 48 hours, remove the outer white dressing.
- **Do NOT remove** the yellow (Xeroform) layer. If a Xeroform dressing is present, keep it completely dry by covering it with plastic wrap or a waterproof bandage (e.g., Tegaderm) during showers. **Do Not Get Wet!** Follow your surgeon's instructions until your follow-up.

If Your Wound Heals Naturally (Secondary Intent)

- Leave the pressure dressing in place for 48 hours. Do not get wet.
- After 48 hours, remove it and clean gently twice daily with soap and warm water. Do not scrub.
- With a clean Q-Tip, apply **Vaseline, Mupirocin, OR Polysporin** 2× daily.
- Avoid **Neosporin** and **triple antibiotic ointment** (causes allergic reactions).
- Cover with a **bandage (non-stick pad and tape)**.
- Some mild pink-tinged or yellowish serous drainage on the bandage is normal. Call the office immediately if you experience green or purulent drainage, foul odor from the wound or dressing, increased warmth, redness or swelling around the wound or severe or worsening pain.

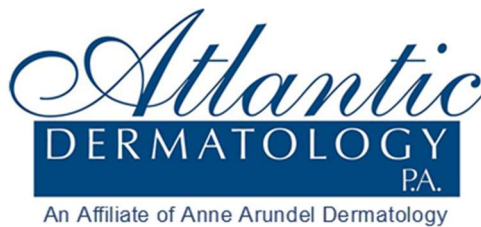
Activity Restrictions

- **Rest** for the first 48 hours.
- **Avoid:**
 - Limit exertion: For 7–14 days, avoid vigorous activities such as heavy lifting, exercise, running, yoga, golf, or any activity that raises your blood pressure, as these can increase the risk of bleeding or suture separation.
 - Avoid submerging the wound: Do not fully submerge the wound in water while sutures are in place. Avoid swimming, hot tubs, the beach, and soaking baths until the area is fully healed. It is safe to shower after 48 hours.
 - Alcohol for 48 hours.
 - Sun protection: Protect the wound from sun exposure for 6 months using SPF 30+ sunscreen or clothing once the wound is fully closed to prevent discoloration or poor scar appearance.

Follow-up and Scar Care

- Attend your follow-up: Schedule and attend your follow-up appointment (typically 7-14 days post-surgery) for suture removal or wound evaluation.
- Scar management: Once the wound is fully closed (usually within 2–3 weeks), discuss scar care options with your surgeon. Products such as silicone gel or silicone sheets (e.g., **Strataderm**, available for purchase in our office) can help minimize scarring and improve healing results.

For emergencies or questions, contact our office at (910) 251-9944 to reach our on-call physician. If you believe this is a life-threatening emergency, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WOUND HEALING PROCESS

When will my scar start to fade?

It takes a full year for the healing process to be complete. Most of the significant changes are in the first 6 months. Your scar will go through several stages of healing before becoming the final result.

When will the area of my surgery feel normal again?

It can take 1-2 years for the nerves to “settle down”. Small superficial nerves are always cut during the removal of the cancer. As they grow back you may experience numbness, tingling or a crawling sensation (paresthesias). Some areas may never gain full feeling back. This is unavoidable and normal.

Why does my scar feel lumpy?

You may feel bumps and lumps under the skin. This is normal and is due to the dissolvable sutures under the surface of the skin. These deep sutures take several months to completely dissolve and the scar will not be smooth until this time. Occasionally a red bump forms along the suture line when a dissolvable suture works its way to the surface. This is only temporary, and applying a warm compress to the area usually helps it resolve. If it does not resolve, please call us.

Why is my scar puffy?

Sometimes 1-3 months after surgery a scar will become raised or “puffy”. These scars will often benefit from a small steroid-based injection or minor surgical revision. If needed, this is usually performed 3-6 months after surgery. If this is something you think you may require, please do not hesitate to call us for an appointment.

Can my wound open up?

During the first several weeks following your surgery, your wound is fragile. Be careful not engage in activities that put tension on the wound, or to pull or tug on it, as it could break open. It will take the area a full 6-12 months to return to 80% of its original strength.

When may I apply make-up or sunscreen?

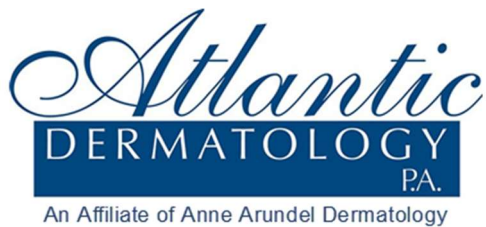
You may apply makeup or sunscreen once the sutures are removed and the wound is fully healed (no open, oozing, or scabbing areas). This typically occurs 1–2 weeks after surgery, depending on your healing progress. Use a mineral-based sunscreen with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide as the active ingredient, as the healed skin is highly sun-sensitive. Daily sun protection is critical to prevent discoloration and support scar healing.

Should I use anti-scar creams or massage?

Once you begin dressing changes in the days immediately following your surgery, apply 100% pure petroleum jelly (Vaseline), Mupirocin ointment (prescription), or Polysporin ointment to promote proper wound healing. Do not use Neosporin, as it may cause irritation or allergic reaction.

After your sutures are removed, you may begin using a 100% silicone scar gel or silicone gel sheets, such as Strataderm, which are available for purchase in our office. If you experience any irritation from these products, discontinue use and contact our office for guidance.

Gentle daily massage of the scar for 10–15 minutes per day can help soften and flatten the scar tissue. Please wait at least 3 weeks after surgery before beginning massage to avoid placing stress on the incision site.



Why is it hard to breathe through my nose?

If you had surgery on or near your nose, the swelling inside the nose may persist for several months. Initially this may feel like a lump inside the nose but will shrink with time. If breathing difficulties persist or worsen, please contact our office at (910) 251-9944 option 3.

Will I have another skin cancer?

Having had one skin cancer significantly increases your risk of developing another. Regular skin checks with a board-certified dermatologist, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner are essential for early detection. Preventive measures, such as daily use of broad-spectrum sunscreen and sun-protective clothing, are critical to reducing your risk.

What are signs of infection?

Watch for signs of infection, such as increased redness, warmth, swelling, pain, pus, or fever (above 100.4°F/38°C). If you notice these symptoms or if the wound reopens or bleeds excessively, contact our office immediately at (910) 251-9944 option 3 for evaluation.

What activities should I avoid during recovery?

Avoid strenuous exercise, heavy lifting, or activities that stretch the surgical site for at least 2–4 weeks, depending on the location and size of the wound. Consult your surgeon for personalized advice. Swimming in pools, lakes, or oceans should be avoided until the wound is fully healed (typically 2–4 weeks) to prevent infection. No hot tubs for 4 weeks.

How should I care for my wound immediately after surgery?

Keep the surgical site clean and dry for the first 24–48 hours, as instructed. Follow your surgeon's specific wound care protocol, which may include gently cleaning the area with mild soap and water, applying petroleum jelly or prescribed ointment, and covering with a sterile bandage. Avoid picking at scabs or crusting to prevent scarring or **infection**.

Can I shower or bathe after surgery?

You can typically shower 48 hours after surgery, but avoid direct water pressure on the wound. Pat the area dry gently and reapply any prescribed ointment or bandage as directed. Avoid soaking the wound (e.g., in baths or hot tubs) until it is fully healed, typically 2–4 weeks.

What should I expect at my follow-up appointment?

Your follow-up appointment, typically scheduled 1–2 weeks after surgery, allows us to check wound healing, remove sutures if needed, and address any concerns. We may discuss scar management options or additional treatments, such as steroid injections or scar therapy if necessary. Call (910) 251-9944 option 3 to confirm or reschedule your appointment.

How can I manage pain or discomfort after surgery?

Mild pain or discomfort is normal for a few days after surgery. Use over-the-counter acetaminophen (Tylenol) as directed, unless otherwise advised by your surgeon. Avoid aspirin, as it may increase bleeding risk. Swelling and bruising are normal and can take several days to weeks to resolve. If you notice rapidly expanding swelling under suture line or if pain worsens or persists beyond a few days, contact our office at (910) 251-9944 option 3.

Are there dietary or lifestyle changes that support healing?

Eat a balanced diet rich in protein, vitamins (especially vitamin C and zinc), and hydration to support tissue repair. Avoid smoking and limit alcohol, as these can delay healing and increase scarring risk.

Remember it takes a full year for your final result. Patience is the key, but if any time you feel you need to be seen or just need reassurance, do not hesitate to call: (910) 251-9944 option 3.