

# Cuts Closed With Stitches: Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

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A cut can happen anywhere on your body.

The doctor used stitches to close the cut. Using stitches also helps the cut heal and reduces scarring. Sometimes pieces of tape called Steri-Strips are put over the stitches.

If the cut went deep and through the skin, the doctor may have put in two layers of stitches. The deeper layer brings the deep part of the cut together. These stitches will dissolve and don't need to be removed. The stitches in the upper layer are the ones you see on the cut.

You will probably have a bandage over the stitches. You will need to have the stitches removed, usually in 7 to 14 days.

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, **get medical treatment right away.**

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

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- Keep the cut dry for the first 24 to 48 hours. After this, you can shower if your doctor okays it. Pat the cut dry.
- Don't soak the cut, such as in a bathtub. Your doctor will tell you when it's safe to get the cut wet.
- If your doctor told you how to care for your cut, follow your doctor's instructions. If you did not get instructions, follow this general advice:
  - After the first 24 to 48 hours, wash around the cut with clean water 2 times a day. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol, which can slow healing.
  - You may cover the cut with a thin layer of petroleum jelly, such as Vaseline, and a nonstick bandage.
  - Apply more petroleum jelly and replace the bandage as needed.
- Prop up the sore area on a pillow anytime you sit or lie down during the next 3 days. Try to keep it above the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Avoid any activity that could cause your cut to reopen.
- Do not remove the stitches on your own. Your doctor will tell you when to come back to have the stitches removed.
- Leave Steri-Strips on until they fall off.
- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new pain, or your pain gets worse.
- The skin near the cut is cold or pale or changes color.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness near the cut.
- The cut starts to bleed, and blood soaks through the bandage. Oozing small amounts of blood is normal.
- You have trouble moving the area near the cut.
- You have symptoms of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness around the cut.
  - Red streaks leading from the cut.
  - Pus draining from the cut.
  - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- The cut reopens.
- You do not get better as expected.

### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **R217** in the search box to learn more about "**Cuts Closed With Stitches: Care Instructions**".

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