

## Wounds and Scars

All cuts heal with a scar. If good care is given to a scar early while it is healing, the result will be a less notable scar. Scars continue to mature and change for up to 12-18 months. During this time there will be pinkness in the wound. The final quality of the scar is determined by the wound itself, inherited skin healing qualities and how well the wound was cared for.

The following steps will help you care for your child's wound.

### After the Cut is Repaired

- Keep the area clean and dry.
- Leave any bandages intact for the first 48 hours.
- If there is no bandage, apply a thin coat of antibiotic ointment for approximately three to seven days depending on how quickly the cut is healing.

### If Your Child Has Stitches

- Once the bandage is removed, clean the area daily with soap and water. A small amount of topical antibiotic ointment may be applied once or twice a day for 3 days.
- If there is dried drainage around the stitches, it can be removed by gently cleaning with soap and water.

After the stitches are removed, continue to keep the area clean and dry. Using sunblock on the affected area is recommended for one year from the time of injury.

## Improving the Appearance of the Scar

### Scar Massage

The body heals wounds by laying down new proteins. The healing area is a ridge that can be felt along the site of the cut. Massage can help this smooth out to a flat surface.

Using a thick moisturizer (cocoa butter, vitamin E), rub the wound for 5-10 minutes two to three times daily. You must use enough pressure to change the color of the cut from pink to pale. Benefits from massage last until all the pink is gone from the wound. Wait for three weeks after the cut is repaired before massaging.

### Sun Protection

Any fresh scar (one that is still pink) can get sunburned, even in dark-skinned people. Once a scar gets burned or tanned, it will not fade back to its normal color and a dark spot will always be present. It is best to avoid sun on a fresh wound. Clothing with long sleeves, full-length pants and hats provide good sun protection. If the wound is not covered by clothing, it should be covered with sun block. The zinc- and titanium-oxide-based sun blocks (which are waterproof) work the best, but any sun block with SPF of 15 or greater will work if applied often.

### Activity After a Cut, Wound or Scar

Cuts deep enough to require stitches need to be protected from stress, which might cause them to reopen. For two to six weeks after stitches, no contact sports or rough activities should be allowed. Due to the variations in incisions and scars, please ask your health care provider how long activities should be limited.

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