

## Care for Your Open Wound or Draining Abscess

Careful attention will help your wound heal smoothly. Keep the area clean and protected from further injury. Gentle heat will increase blood flow, and speed healing. A warm, wet towel applied for 20 minutes several times a day is enough. Be careful not to burn yourself.

Do not let your wound dry out. This could damage the delicate new cells that are growing.

Cleaning your hands and the surrounding skin with mild soap and warm water is usually enough. A daily shower with all bandages removed will help prevent buildup of debris that would harbor the growth of more bacteria. Your doctor will tell you if full sterile technique is necessary.

### WET TO DRY DRESSINGS:

- Three times a day remove bandages and clean the wound. You may shower at this time. Gently clean out all loose debris with a Q-tip or washcloth.
- If your wound is not draining much, moisten a piece of gauze with saline, and gently place gauze into the deepest part of the wound.
- Do not pack tightly, but do keep the wound edges from touching, so that the wound can heal from the inside out.
- If the wound is draining, pack with dry gauze to absorb excess moisture.
- For copious drainage, sanitary pads can very absorbent and cushiony, and is an inexpensive dressing.

Wound drainage may be clear, cloudy, pink, yellow, dark red, or brown. It should gradually become clearer, and be produced in smaller amounts. A small amount of blood is normal.

Your doctor may recommend wound gel. This can be changed either once or twice a day. Clean the wounds as described above then put a thin layer of gel on dry gauze to place into the wound.

A very small wound can be treated with antibiotic ointment and dry gauze or a band-aid, changed as needed.

You should notice the wound shrinking, with less discomfort and discharge over time.

Report to your doctor if:

1. there is increasing pain, swelling, redness, foul odor, or drainage

2. You feel ill, or start having fevers over 100F
3. If you have any problems, please contact the Surgery Department at (408) 972-6010 between 9-12noon and 1:30 - 5:00pm. You may also call the advice nurse at (408) 362-4740 after hours and on weekends.