

Incision care after heart surgery



Your child's incision will need special care for a while once your child leaves the hospital. Please follow the doctor's advice and these guidelines to help your child's incision heal.

How do I care for my child's incision?

- Your child may take a bath or shower. Wash the incision and chest tube sites gently every day with soap and water. Then rinse and pat dry.
 - Do this 1 time each day for the first 14 days after surgery.
 - Only use fresh water from the faucet on your child's incision.
 - Do not soak the incision or let it stay under water.
- Do not put any lotion, cream or ointments on the incision or chest tube sites. You may put sunscreen on the incision after 2 weeks.
- Your child's incision may itch. Itching is normal and is part of the healing process.
- At first, the incision will be slightly raised with a small amount of redness. The swelling and redness will go away over time.
- You may take a picture of your child's incision on the day you leave the hospital. You may use the picture at home to help see changes in the incision.

What is covering the incision?

Your child may have a dressing that covers their incision. You will remove the dressing at home.

Your child may have one of the dressings listed below. Talk with the doctor about your child's dressing.

- Dermabond is a clear skin adhesive that holds the skin edges together and provides a protective barrier.
 - Do not pick at the Dermabond.
 - Remove the dressing 14 days after surgery. See your "How to Remove Dermabond" sheet for more details.
- Dermabond Prineo is a self-adhesive mesh that holds the skin edges together and provides a protective barrier.
 - Remove the dressing 14 days after surgery. See your "How to Remove Dermabond Prineo" sheet for more details.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor **right away** if you notice signs of infection, such as:

- Increased swelling.
- Increased redness around the incision or chest tube sites or red streaks moving away from these sites.
- Increased pain or tenderness.
- Drainage or bleeding from the incision.
- A bad smell from the incision.
- Your child has a fever over 100.5°F (38°C).

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Incision care after heart surgery, continued

Also call your child's doctor if:

- The incision opens or separates.
- You have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

What type of activity can my child take part in?

The bony part of the chest was separated in surgery. It takes 6 weeks for the bones in the chest to fully heal. Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some guidelines to follow include:

- **School and day care**
 - Most children may return to school or day care after the first post-operative (post-op) visit with the surgeon. This visit is most often 1 week after discharge.
 - Your child should not carry a backpack for 6 weeks.
 - Your child may not lift more than 5 pounds for 6 weeks.
 - Most children may attend PE after 6 weeks. Ask your child's doctor when your child may return to PE classes.
- **Play and sports**
 - Encourage your child to walk and return to their normal routine as they are able. Your child may feel like playing the first day you are home. Your child may walk up and down stairs.
 - Do not pull your child by their arms, and do not pick them up under their arms for 6 weeks.
 - Avoid sharp blows to the chest. Do not let your child play contact sports for 6 weeks.
 - Do not let your child play games that could cause something to hit their chest for 6 weeks. This includes jumping on the trampoline, doing karate, wrestling and playing on monkey bars.
 - If enrolled in physical therapy (PT), your child may return and follow guidelines given to you in the hospital.
 - For babies:
 - Encourage tummy time while awake and supervised. There are no problems with babies rolling onto their tummies.
 - You may burp your baby on your shoulder or hold them on your knee as you support their head and neck.
- **Cars and trucks**
 - Always wear a seat belt in the car. Always use an infant car seat or a booster seat.
 - Do not place any padding on or around the seat belt or car seat straps.
 - Teens should not drive a car for 6 weeks.
- **Swimming**
 - Your child may swim in a chlorine or saltwater pool after 2 weeks or as advised by the surgeon.
 - Your child may swim in a lake, in a river, or in the ocean after 2 months.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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