

Neurosurgical Incisions

Key Points

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before caring for the incision.
- Do not peek under the bandage or remove the surgery bandage until directed by your health care provider.

This information will help you and your family care for your incision once you return home. This should only be used as a reference guide; your health care provider's instructions should always be followed first.

Call Telehealth Nursing (651-229-3890) if:

- You have any signs of infection
- The incision pulls apart or opens up

Signs of Infection

An incision that's healing might look pink. It should not be inflamed or deep red. Be sure to watch for any signs of infection, including:

- Redness, swelling or drainage
- Heat or warmth at the incision site
- Tender, enlarged lymph nodes in an armpit or the groin area
- An ongoing fever

Bandages

- If your bandages become dirty or wet during the first 48 hours after surgery, call Telehealth Nursing (651-229-3890).
- Bandages covering the incision must be left on as directed by your health care provider.
- The Steri-Strip bandages will peel off and eventually come off your skin. If these start to pull up from the edges, trim the edges off. If the Steri-Strip comes off and the incision looks like it still needs to heal, put on a new Steri-Strip. They can be found at a drug store.
- If the incision is rubbing against clothing, gauze may be used to protect the incision.

Water

Your surgical incision needs time to heal before it can be immersed or soaked in water.

- **Sponge bath:** You may take a sponge bath. But while washing yourself, make sure to keep your incision dry. Don't let water you're using to clean other parts of your body touch your incision during a sponge bath.
- **Shower:** You may take a shower 48 hours after surgery. If the dressing is still on the incision before your first shower, do not remove it before the shower. However, after that shower, remove the wet dressing. Then, if your health care provider has told you to keep your dressing on for more than 48 hours after surgery, put a new, dry dressing on the incision.
- **Tub bath:** Don't take a tub bath for at least 30 days after your surgery, or until the sutures on your incision are no longer visible—whichever comes last.
- **Swimming/water bodies:** Avoid all bodies of water (including pools, hot tubs, whirlpools, oceans, rivers and lakes) for at least 30 days after your surgery, or until the sutures on your incision are no longer visible—whichever comes last. You might need to avoid bodies of water until your doctor says it's ok to go in them.

Scarring

To reduce scarring:

- Try not to expose your incision to the sun for a year. If you can't avoid the sun, wear a white T-shirt and use sunscreen.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables and whole-grain breads. Increase intake of vitamin C and protein. Drink plenty of water and juices. Good nutrition is necessary for healing.

Make An Appointment [651-290-8707](tel:651-290-8707) Refer a Patient [651-325-2200](tel:651-325-2200)

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](tel:651-229-3890).