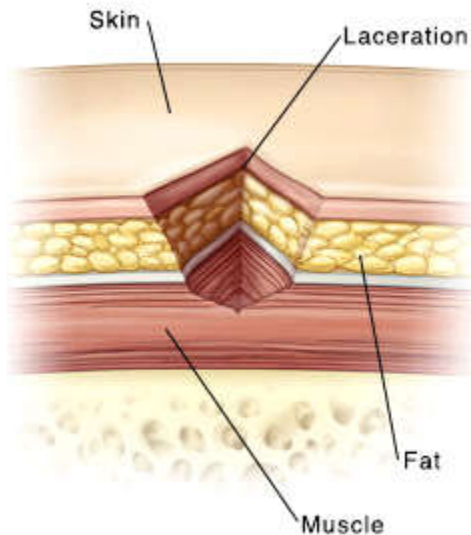


## Laceration: All Closures

A laceration is a cut through the skin. This will usually require stitches (sutures) or staples if it is deep. Minor cuts may be treated with a surgical tape closure or skin glue.



### Home care

- Your healthcare provider may prescribe an antibiotic. This is to help prevent infection. Follow all instructions for taking this medicine. Take the medicine every day until it is gone or you are told to stop. You should not have any left over.
- The healthcare provider may prescribe medicines for pain. If no pain medicines were prescribed, you can use over-the-counter pain medicines. Follow instructions for taking any pain medicines. (Note: If you have chronic liver or kidney disease, or ever had a stomach ulcer or gastrointestinal bleeding, talk with your doctor before using these medicines.)
- Follow the healthcare provider's instructions on how to care for the cut.
- Keep the wound clean and dry. Do not get the wound wet until you are told it is OK to do so. If the area gets wet, gently pat it dry with a clean cloth. Replace the wet bandage with a dry one.
- If a bandage was applied and it becomes wet or dirty, replace it. Otherwise, leave it in place for the first 24 hours.
- Caring for sutures or staples: Once you no longer need to keep them dry, clean the wound daily. First, remove the bandage. Then wash the area gently with soap and warm water, or as directed by the healthcare provider. Use a wet cotton swab to loosen and remove any blood or crust that forms. After cleaning, apply a thin layer of antibiotic ointment if advised. Then put on a new bandage unless you are told not to.

- Caring for skin glue: Don't put apply liquid, ointment, or cream on the wound while the glue is in place. Avoid activities that cause heavy sweating. Protect the wound from sunlight. Do not scratch, rub, or pick at the adhesive film. Do not place tape directly over the film. The glue should peel off within 5 to 10 days.
- Caring for surgical tape: Keep the area dry. If it gets wet, blot it dry with a clean towel. Surgical tape usually falls off within 7 to 10 days. If it has not fallen off after 10 days, you can take it off yourself. Put mineral oil or petroleum jelly on a cotton ball and gently rub the tape until it is removed.
- Once you can get the wound wet, you may shower as usual but do not soak the wound in water (no tub baths or swimming)
- Even with proper treatment, a wound infection may sometimes occur. Check the wound daily for signs of infection listed below.

### **Scalp wounds**

During the first 2 days, you may carefully rinse your hair in the shower to remove blood, glass or dirt particles. After two days, you may shower and shampoo your hair normally. Do not soak your scalp in the tub or go swimming until the stitches or staples have been removed. Talk with your healthcare provider before applying any antibiotic ointment to the wound.

### **Mouth wounds**

Eat soft foods to reduce pain. If the cut is inside of your mouth, clean by rinsing after each meal and at bedtime with a mixture of equal parts water and hydrogen peroxide (do not swallow!). Or, you can use a cotton swab to directly apply hydrogen peroxide onto the cut. You may also be prescribed a chlorhexidine solution to rise with. Mouth wounds can be painful when eating. You may use an over-the-counter local numbing solution for pain relief. If this is not available, you may use any numbing solution intended for teething babies. You may apply this directly to the sores with a cotton-tip swab or with your finger.

### **Follow-up care**

Follow up with your healthcare provider as advised. Ask your healthcare provider how long sutures should be left in place. Be sure to return for suture removal as directed. If dissolving stitches were used in the mouth, these should fall out or dissolve without the need for removal. If tape closures were used, remove them yourself when your provider recommends if they have not fallen off on their own. If skin glue was used, the film will wear off by itself. Generally, you should keep healing wounds out of direct sunlight for the first couple of months to try to lessen scarring.

### **When to seek medical advice**

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of these occur:

- Signs of infection, including increasing pain in the wound, increasing wound redness or swelling, or pus or bad odor coming from the wound

- Fever of 100.4°F (38.°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Stitches or staples come apart or fall out or surgical tape falls off before 7 days
- Wound edges reopen
- Wound changes colors
- Numbness around the wound after any numbing medicine should have worn off
- Decreased movement around the injured area

### **Call 911**

Call 911 if you can't control the wound bleeding with direct pressure.

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