



---

**Education**

**Sutured Wound Care**

**Home Care**

Keep the wound completely dry for the first 24 hours. Then begin washing it gently with warm water and liquid soap 1 or 2 times a day. Apply an antibiotic ointment after you wash the wound to keep a thick scab from forming over the sutures (stitches). The wound should not be soaked. After 24 hours, your child can take brief showers. Avoid swimming, baths, or soaking the wound until the sutures are removed. Water in the wound can interfere with healing.

Most contaminated wounds that are going to become infected do so 24 to 72 hours after the injury. A 2- to 3-millimeter rim of pinkness or redness just around the edge of a wound can be normal. However, the area of redness should not spread. It is also normal for there to be some pain and tenderness. The pain and swelling should be greatest during the second day and then become less in the days to follow. If the wound continues to be painful and the redness spreads, call your child's doctor.

**Suture Removal**

Sutures are ready for removal at different times, depending on the site of the wound. The following table can serve as a guide.

Area of Body	Number of Days
Face . . . . .	3 to 4
Neck . . . . .	5
Scalp . . . . .	6
Chest or abdomen . . . . .	7
Arms and backs of hands . . . . .	7
Legs and tops of feet . . . . .	10
Back . . . . .	10
Palms of hands or soles of feet . . . . .	14

Your child's stitches should be removed on the correct day. Stitches removed too late can leave unnecessary skin marks or even scarring. If any sutures come out too early, call your child's health care provider and in the meantime reinforce the wound with tape that pulls the edges together or with butterfly Band-Aids. Continue the tape until the date when the sutures are due to be removed.

**Protection**

After removal of sutures:

- Protect the wound from injury during the following month.
- Avoid sports that could reinjure the wound. If a sport is essential, apply tape to the wound before playing.

**Scars**

A sutured wound will develop a scar. All wounds heal by scarring. The scar can be kept to a minimum by taking the sutures out at the right time, preventing wound infections, and protecting the wound from being injured again during

---

the first month after the injury. The healing process continues for 6 to 12 months. Only after this time will the scar assume its final appearance.

**Call your child's health care provider immediately if:**

- An unexplained fever (over 100 degrees F, or 37.8 degrees C) occurs.
- There is a red streak or red area that spreads from the wound.

**Call your child's health care provider within 24 hours if:**

- It looks infected (for example, pus or a pimple).
- A stitch comes out early.
- You have other questions or concerns.

Pediatric Advisor 2006.4; Copyright © 2006 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All Rights Reserved. Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books. This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.