

Caring for wounds closed with stitches (sutures)

Your child's wound has been cleaned by a nurse or doctor and stitches have been used to hold the edges of the wound together to help it heal.

How to look after your child's wound

- Keep the wound dry. Try to keep it completely dry for the first 24 hours. After this your child can have a brief shower or bath. Gently pat the wound dry, do not rub.
- Avoid soaking the wound for the first 7 days. This includes soaking in the bath or going swimming.
- Do not let your child pick or scratch the wound.
- Do not use creams or ointments over the stitches, unless told to by a doctor, as this can make them weaker.
- The stitches need to be removed in 5 to 10 days. The timing depends on where the wound is. Your nurse or doctor will give you more specific advice about this. If stitches are removed too soon the wound might not heal properly, but if they are left in too long they might be difficult to get out and increase the risk of scarring. You should arrange for your child to see their GP or practice nurse for stitches removal.

At first your child might need regular painkillers. Use paracetamol or ibuprofen as instructed on the packets. If your child has a pre-existing medical condition, please speak to a doctor or nurse for advice on pain relief.

When to get help

Contact your GP or come back to the Emergency Department (A&E) if:

- the wound re-opens or starts bleeding
- the wound shows signs of infection such as:
 - increasing redness or swelling to the area around the wound
 - pus, discharge, or an unpleasant smell from the wound
 - your child develops a high temperature (over 38C)

Wound aftercare

- Once the wound has healed, massaging the scar 2 times a day with a moisturiser or oil will help improve its appearance
- The scar will be sensitive to sun damage, so make sure it is covered up or sun cream is used before sun exposure

NHS 111

NHS 111 is a telephone service that offers support and advice 24 hours a day. Please call 111 if you have concerns about your child's health. A fully trained advisor will direct you to appropriate resources or services.

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