

Wound Dehiscence

Wound dehiscence occurs when a surgical incision that has been stitched closed separates and opens up again.

A wound can become separated when stress or tension on the wound overcomes the strength of the stitches used to close the incision. Lifting, strenuous exercise, or stretching before the wound is fully healed are common causes of wound dehiscence.

Wound dehiscence is a challenging complication, as it must heal by secondary intention—meaning the wound is left open to heal from the bottom up. This interruption in the recovery process leads to delayed wound healing.

INSTRUCTIONS

Maintenance of a clean, moist, and protected wound surface is critical for healing.

- To prevent drying and crust formation, apply a layer of vaseline to the wound with a q-tip and cover with a semi-occlusive dressing.
- Change bandage daily. Be careful not to further injure the skin with aggressive bandage removal.
- If your skin is sensitive to adhesive, remove bandage in the shower— allowing water to soak the bandage and loosen the adhesive before removal.
- Continue these steps until the wound is healed.

Please remember, this is a slow healing process and can take weeks to months for the wound to fully heal.

If you have any questions, please call (205) 995-5575 or text (205) 627-4207.

Wound Dehiscence

AFTERCARE

WHAT HAPPENED?

Wound dehiscence is the unintended separation of the layers of a wound that was sutured/stitched closed after surgery - a.k.a. "popping open your stitches." This wound must now heal by secondary intention (see full size diagram on page 2).

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

Lifting, strenuous exercise, or stretching before the wound is fully healed are common causes of wound dehiscence. This most commonly occurs 5-7 days after surgery.

WHAT NOW?

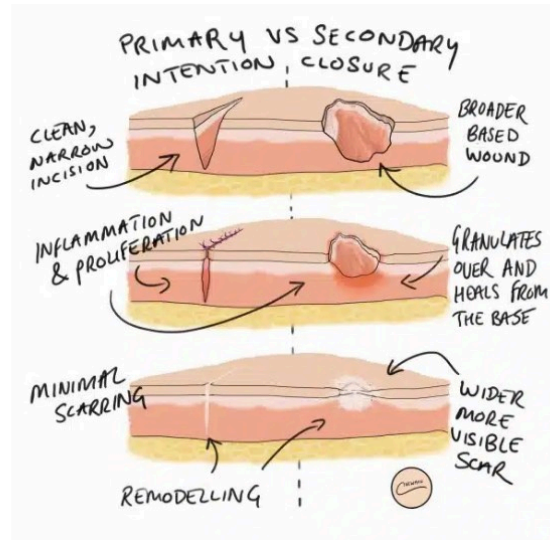
You have two options:

1. **Use the instructions on this sheet to heal your reopened surgery site.** Basically, popping your stitches significantly changes and delays the ability of your wound to heal. Keep in mind your current surgery site can take weeks to months for the wound to fully heal, and the scar will no longer be a straight line.
2. **Surgical Repair:** A surgical repair will require a surgery appointment and will be charged to your insurance exactly like your original surgery. Charges will be subject to any copays or deductibles. The repair surgery is basically a "re-do" in which the original surgery site is widened and then stitched closed. If the new surgery site is cared for properly, your healing time will be around 14 days. This is also the recommended option if you are concerned about the cosmetic appearance of your scar. *If your wound is infected, repair surgery must be delayed until the infection is resolved.*

INSTRUCTIONS TO HEAL REOPENED SURGERY SITE WITHOUT REPAIR SURGERY

Keep your wound clean, moist, and protected at the wound surface if you want it to heal correctly.

- Prevent drying and crust formation by applying a layer of Vaseline to the wound with a Q-tip and cover with a bandage.
- Bandage options:
 - **Paper tape & gauze** - fine for sensitive skin | can be found at any drug store | change daily
 - **Mepilex brand or hydrocolloid bandages** | fine for sensitive skin | can be found easily on Amazon | can shower in bandage | change every 2 days
- Continue these steps until the wound is healed.



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HEALING PROCESS BEFORE POPPING STITCHES VS. AFTER

