

Incision Care: Abdomen



Dressing your incision helps keep it clean, dry, and infection-free. That way, it will heal faster. Follow the steps below, whether dressing the incision yourself or with the help of a family member or other caregiver.



Step 1. Wash your hands and set up

- Use liquid soap. Lather and scrub vigorously for at least 20 seconds. Scrub between your fingers and under your nails.
- Rinse with clean, running water, keeping fingers pointing down. Use a clean paper towel to dry your hands and turn off the faucet.
- It's also acceptable to clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Put all your supplies on a clean cloth or paper towel. Open a plastic trash bag.
- Peel back the edges of the dressing packages. Pour any irrigation solutions into solution cups.
- Clean the scissors with soap and water. Cut each piece of tape 4 inches longer than the dressing.

Step 2. Remove the old dressing

- Put on new disposable medical gloves.
- Loosen the tape by pulling gently toward the incision. Remove the dressing one layer at a time. Put it right into the plastic bag.
- Remove your gloves and put them in the plastic bag. Wash your hands again, as described above. Then put on new gloves.

Step 3. Clean and dress the incision

- Clean the incision and apply a new dressing as directed.
- Put all used supplies in the plastic bag.
- Remove your gloves last and put them in the bag.
- Seal the bag and put it in the trash.
- Be sure to wash your hands again.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if any of these happen:

- Your incision suddenly opens
- You have bleeding from the incision, or an increase in its size
- Increased redness, swelling, or drainage
- Pain in or around the incision
- Change in the color of the incision
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Chills

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