

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WOUND HEALING PROCESS

When will my scar start to fade?

It takes a full year for the healing process to be complete. Most of the significant changes are in the first 6 months. Your scar will go through several stages of healing before the redness fades and it settles down into a fine whitish line.

When will the area of my surgery feel normal again?

It can take 1-2 years for the nerves to “settle down”. Small superficial nerves are always cut during the removal of the cancer. As they grow back you may experience numbness, tingling or a crawling sensation. Some areas may never gain full feeling back. This is unavoidable and normal.

Why does my scar feel lumpy or look puffy?

You may feel bumps and lumps under the skin. This is normal and is due to the dissolvable sutures under the surface of the skin. These deep sutures take months to completely dissolve and the scar will not be smooth until this time. Occasionally a red bump or pustule forms along the suture line when a buried stitch works its way to the surface. This is only temporary, and applying a warm compress to the spot usually helps it resolve. If it does not resolve please call us. If the area looks swollen or puffy 6-9 months after the surgery please call the office for re-evaluation.

What if my wound opens up?

During the first several weeks following your surgery, your wound is fragile. Be careful not to pull or tug on it, as it could break open. It will take the area a full 6 months to return to 95% of its original strength. If for some reason the wound opens up, continue with Vaseline on the open area as likely it will heal on its own. Although an open wound can be initially unsightly they usually heal very well and can be evaluated for a minor revision if needed.

Why is there bruising and swelling under my eyes?

The thin skin under the eye shows bruising and swelling more than the surrounding skin. This may even look like a fluid filled blister or sack under the eye or cheek and can come and go even weeks after the surgery. Sometimes sites distant from the eyes can cause swelling or bruising around the eyes.

Why is it hard to breathe through my nose?

If you had surgery on or near your nose, the swelling inside the nose may persist for several months. Initially this may feel like a lump inside the nose but will shrink with time.

When will my sutures dissolve?

Unless we tell you differently, you have two layers of dissolving sutures. The top sutures will dissolve in the first week. The deep sutures will take up to 4 months to dissolve and the wound will be lumpy, bumpy until that time has passed.

When may I apply make-up or sunscreen?

You may apply make-up and/or sunscreen after the top sutures are dissolved or are removed, and the wound is completely healed (no oozing areas). Once healed, good sun protection is important as the ‘new skin’ in the wound area is sensitive to sun.

Should I use anti-scar creams or massage?

Generally these products are not harmful, unless they irritate your skin or you become allergic to them. There are a number of creams and products that help to moisturize the wound, which may help improve the healing. Plain Vaseline® works very well, is inexpensive, and non-allergenic. Daily massage of the scar for 10-15 minutes a day can help the scar fade. You should wait at least 3 weeks before starting massage to avoid stress on the scar.

Will I have another skin cancer?

You have demonstrated the ability to have a skin cancer. Your best defense is to see your dermatologist on a regular basis. Regular skin checks can detect skin cancers even before you notice them. Prevention is key and good sun protection, including sunscreen is crucial.

Remember it takes a full year for your final result. Patience is the key, but if any time you feel you need to be seen or just need reassurance, do not hesitate to call:

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