

LACERATION

Current Anticipatory guidance Recommendations and Education (CARE)

What is a Laceration?

- A laceration is another word for a cut
- Many cuts need to be repaired but not all and this depends on the size, how deep it is and the location
- Lacerations require repair not only to decrease scarring but also to decrease chance of infection and chance of damage to structures underneath as well as decrease bleeding

What should I expect?

- No matter what, **any cut will become a scar**. Repairing the cut MAY help reduce this scar
- Some cuts are repaired with stitches (sutures) or staples while others are repaired with special skin glue or special skin tape
- Some of the stitches are “absorbable” and may not need to be taken out. Others are “non-absorbable” and you will need to follow up with your Primary Care Doctor or Pediatrician to have them taken out. The Doctor in the Emergency Department will tell you which type
- Cuts from animal bites may need to be left open or closed only loosely to allow drainage
- **Antibiotics are not needed** for most cuts unless the cut is from an animal bite or very dirty
- Washing will be done in the emergency department and is very important for preventing infection
- After approximately one year you will have an idea of how the cut will finally look
- If there is a lot of scarring or the cut has trouble healing, after several months you may see a plastic surgeon for ideas

What can I do for my child?

- Keep the repaired cut dry for about 24 hour
- After 24 hours your child may take a bath or a shower and soap may be allowed on the cut but don't soak it in water. Gentle cleaning may help when it is time to remove sutures but rough cleaning may cause more scarring and slow healing.
- Treat your child with Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen for discomfort
- **Watch the wound for signs of infection**. This includes drainage from the cut that looks like pus. Also look for redness that does not stay at the cut site but starts to spread around the wound. Your child should get re-evaluated if they have a fever as well
- Your doctor may suggest certain types of creams to be put on the wound before it is covered. This should be kept on at home and a light bandaged should be placed over the healing cut. This should be **changed three times a day**.
- Examples of these creams include Bacitracin, Neosporin or Triple Antibiotic Ointment
- Keep the wound clean and out of dirty areas
- Don't pick at the scabs
- **Exposure to the sun increases the chance of scarring**. Take special care to protect the scar even when it does not seem sunny. Sunscreen or hats or clothing coverage may be necessary.
- Avoiding the sun is particularly important of the first 6 months but can be important for up to a year
- Scarring will be lessened if infection is avoided, if the cut is kept clean and dry, if cream is kept on the wound, sutures are removed when necessary, and sun is avoided

- If the cut is repaired with special skin glue or special skin tape, leave these alone. They do not require removal and will come off by themselves in a few days

How long until my sutures come out?

- Cuts should begin to heal over about 3 days but the sutures have to stay in longer for full healing.
- Cuts may remain red at the cut site for around a week to 10 days
- Sutures that are on the face should be looked at by your Primary Care Doctor or Pediatrician in **5 days** and cuts in other locations including the scalp should be looked at in **7 days**. Some stitches like those over elbows and knee joints may have to stay in for up to 14 days
- Sometimes cuts will need a few more days to heal.
- Sometimes stitches that are absorbable need to be taken out

When should I get immediate attention?

- All kids should **follow up with their regular doctors** after being in the Emergency Department
- If your child develops a fever
- If the cut has drainage or a lot of bleeding, or redness surrounding the cut
- If the cut has a bad smell or increased swelling
- If the cut reopens before or after the stitches are taken out
- If your child feels the cut is very painful and medicine such as Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen don't help