

Your Care Instructions

As we get older, our skin gets dry and more fragile. Sometimes this can cause the outer layers of skin to split and tear open.

Skin tears are treated in different ways. In some cases, doctors use pieces of tape called Steri-Strips to pull the skin together and help it heal. Other times, it's best to leave the tear open and cover it with a special wound-care bandage.

Skin tears are usually not serious and heal in a few weeks, but how long you take to heal depends on your body and the type of tear you have. Sometimes the torn piece of skin is used to protect the wound while it heals. But that piece of skin does not heal. It may fall off on its own. Or the doctor may remove it.

As your tear heals, it's important to keep it clean to help prevent infection.

The doctor will check you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, **get medical treatment right away**.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments and call your doctor or the nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- If you have pain, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Be safe with medicines, read and follow all instructions on the label.
- If you have a bandage, follow your doctor's instructions for changing it.
- If you have Steri-Strips, leave them on until they fall off.
- Follow your doctor's instructions about bathing.
- Gently wash the skin tear with plain water two times a day. Do not rub the area.
- Let the area air dry. Or, you can pat it carefully with a soft towel.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor or nurse call line now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness around the tear.
 - Red streaks leading from the tear.
 - Pus draining from the tear.
 - A fever.
- The tear starts to bleed a lot. Small amounts of blood are normal.

Watch closely for changes in your health and be sure to contact your doctor or nurse call line if you do not get better as expected.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information call Health Link at 811.

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