

Wound Care After CO2 Laser Surgery for Actinic Cheilitis

General Instructions

You may bathe or shower after 24 hours. Do not soak the wound.

Remember, keep the treated area covered with ointment at all times. Reapply ointment after meals.

Cleaning the Wound

Begin cleaning 24 hours after your surgery. Clean the lip gently with soap and water, three times a day. Apply a thick coat of _____ after cleaning. You can expect to have medium to large amounts of clear to yellowish drainage for seven to ten days. This is normal and is not a sign of infection. Reapply the ointment throughout the day, whenever your lip becomes dry. Continue this treatment until the new skin has completely covered your lip. Do not let crusts form on your lip. Gently soak crusted areas with a very wet washcloth. Apply for 10 minutes and repeat as needed until all crusts are gone.

Things to Watch For

Pain

Your lip may be very sore and very swollen after surgery. Eat a soft diet - foods that are easy to chew and that do not need a lot of biting to get them into your mouth. You may want to drink through a straw. Avoid salty, hot, and spicy foods.

You may feel some discomfort for three to four days after your laser surgery. Regular Tylenol should help take care of any pain you feel.

Bleeding

If your wound starts to bleed while you are cleaning it, or at any other time, apply firm, constant pressure to it for 15 minutes. This will stop the bleeding. If the bleeding doesn't stop after applying pressure, call the clinic or Urgent Care at the numbers listed at the end of this sheet.

Signs of Infection

Infection is very rare in an open wound. If you notice any signs of infection:

- Increasing redness
- Increasing swelling
- Increasing pain
- Fever
- Pus draining from the lip

call the phone numbers listed at the end of this sheet.

Healing

It usually takes two weeks for the new skin to completely cover the wound. Healing time depends on the size of the wound, where it is, and how quickly you heal. It is normal for the wound to get red at the edges and for the new skin to be pink or red. With time, this will fade and become flesh tone or white.

Your new skin will be pink for about three to six months. If the treated area is in the sun, it may burn easily. Use a lip balm with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or higher. You should also wear a hat when you are in the sun.

Problems/Questions

If you have any problems or questions call the Dermatology Clinic at (612) 467-5524. Before 8 a.m., after 4:30 p.m., and on weekends and holidays call Urgent Care at 1-866-687-7382 (1-866-NURSEVA).

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