Intermountain® Healthcare

Changing a Dressing

After surgery, your wound may have been covered with a **dressing** (bandage). Your doctor may instruct you to change this dressing. Your doctor will also tell you how often to change it. Follow these steps:

1. Wash your hands

- Use an antibacterial soap.
- Wash vigorously for 30 seconds.

2. Prepare your workspace

- Find a clean area where you can set up your supplies. Make sure there are no pets nearby.
- Lay a clean towel over the area.
- Lay out your supplies. These should include:
  - Clean dressing
  - Other: _____

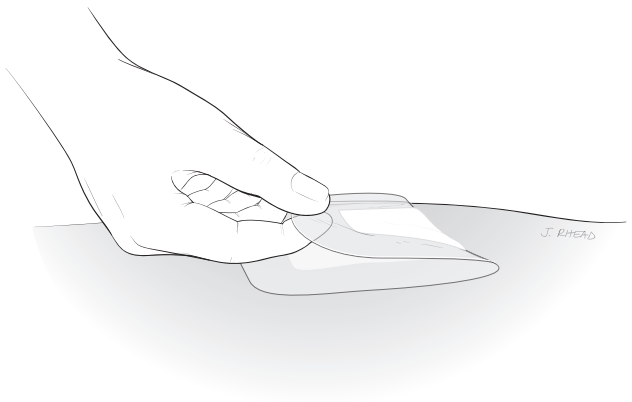
    _____

3. Remove the old dressing

- Slowly lift the edges of the dressing or tape. If the dressing sticks to the wound, soak the edges with adhesive remover.
- Carefully discard the old dressing in a plastic trash bag and tie it closed.
- Wash your hands again. If someone helped you remove the dressing, they must wash their hands also.

4. Clean the incision

- Open your supplies. Keep them inside their packages.
- Gently clean any drainage surrounding the incision. Do NOT scrub the incision.



When removing a dressing, lift the tape across the skin. Don't pull the dressing straight up.

5. Cover the incision

- Place the dressing over the entire incision.
- Gently press the dressing around the edges to seal it, or tape it in place.

6. Wash your hands again.

When to call for help

Call your healthcare providers if:

- Your incision is getting more red
- Your incision is getting more tender
- You see pus (green or yellow fluid) in the incision
- The incision smells bad
- You have a fever over 101° F (38° C)
- Your incision continues to drain more fluid than the dressing can absorb

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