

# VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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*Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery*

## **Burns, Scrapes, Open Wound Care and Antibiotics**

There are a number of creams used for burns and wounds small and large. The main and best one that we know of is Silvadene®. We prescribe it often. You must however get the real thing. Most medications we prescribe are just as good in the generic form but not Silvadene. You must use the real thing or your wound may worsen. Some patients come into the office using some generic and all we do is get them on real Silvadene and the wound improves. The chemical name is silver sulfadiazene, do not be fooled. Make Sure it says SILVADENE® on the label.

If you can take Extra Strength Tylenol then take one or two of these as needed for the pain or discomfort. If you can take Benadryl, the antihistamine pill or caplet, it may help you sleep at night (both for adults - for children use the appropriate dose per your pediatrician).

Healing is most often made worse by doing things that should not be done. **NEVER** use the following:

**Never** use: Peroxide, rubbing alcohol, Iodine or Betadine, Neosporin Ointment, Polysporin Ointment, Triple Antibiotic Ointment, Vaseline Ointment ®. Ointments are based on grease, like for lubricating your car. People are water based and grease irritates the skin and tissues. The other products are caustic, like battery acid. None of these are appropriate for open wounds, never. There are some newer, better products now available as Neosporin and Polysporin **CREAM**. They are hard to find but are replacing ointments now. Look for them.

Many have used Vaseline Ointment to soften skin. It actually breaks it down in old people with very thin skin. You should use Vaseline **Cream** or **Lotion**, as these are water based products and should not irritate the skin. An example of something we do recommend is Vaseline Intensive Care Lotion. There are many hand lotions and creams that may be used to put on the skin but Ointments should NEVER be used according to our thinking.

If you have an injury or wound and were told to wash the area with soap and water. Here are some tips:

Bacteria and germs on the surface of wounds and the skin are best removed by aggressive washing with just plain soap and water. I tell people to use the same soap they are currently using to wash their face. Do not change brands as some people are sensitive to certain formulations of soaps. Use what you normally have been using. Never use hot or cold water, make it lukewarm.

Generally it is best to lather up a washcloth in the shower then scrub the incision or wound. Get dried blood off and remove wound debris as much as practical. Soap surrounds germs and allows them to float off while washing. The use of sterile water or saline is not needed and does not work as well. Use plain water, a washcloth and soap then scrub the area clean. It is normal to get some bleeding. If you have thin blood then you may need to apply a dressing and then pressure. It is appropriate to cover with a dry dressing if you are told to do so, or use the special dressing that we recommended for your particular situation.

If we recommend a cream as Silvadene, then it is usually applied about 1/4 inch thick at first. Use a clean spoon or the like and then cover it with some fluffy gauze. When it is time to change it the cream should not be dried. If so then you did not put enough on the area. When it is working the white cream will turn Grey, Yellow and Green. You may see some bleeding. This is normal. Later, when the wound is healing the discoloration of the cream will diminish. You may be able to use less cream if the doctor tells you to do so.

How do you control excessive bleeding:

Wounds and surgery sites will ooze or bleed. This is expected. One of the functions of the dressing is to collect the oozing and also to put some pressure on the area to minimize the ooze. If it is excessive then it is well to apply pressure directly to the wound. Use the palm of your hand and press hard, about 5 pounds of pressure. You must maintain the pressure for 15 or 20 minutes without releasing. If you release and check the area every 2 or 3 minutes it will never work. Do not remove the dressing, just add to it. If it continues give us a call or go to the Emergency Room.

#### Sensation:

Numbness may be evident at first. Later, as healing begins you may feel pulling, stretching, tingling, intermittent sharp pains. It may itch as nerve endings wake up or grow back. These are all normal.

#### Bruising:

Everybody will get some black and blue areas after surgery of any type. Sometimes it is very pronounced. Many vitamins and medications with thin blood making it seem worse. The discoloration may last a long time. It depends on the patient, how fast they heal and the circulation. The rate of healing slows with age. There may be some irritation around the stitches.

#### Scars after healing:

Plastic surgeons often used more, smaller sutures rather than fewer, larger sutures if possible. If the area is under considerable tension then larger stitches may be needed. Smaller, closely spaced stitches leave a smaller scar mark than larger, widely spaced sutures. There are frequently absorbable sutures inside wounds if they are otherwise surgically clean. In the long run your body forms scar tissue as it repairs itself. This is part of the normal healing process. The areas may become hardened as the healing scar tissue is formed. Normally this firm tissue then softens and may with time disappear completely. This is not a function of how the procedure was done but rather a function of the patients own way of healing. Some patients form too much scar tissue and we cannot control this. One thing we can do is ask that you avoid sun exposure.

#### The sun:

The sun can easily burn surgical sites, wounds or burn sites. Sun exposure will make the area more visible and scar-like. You should avoid any exposure to the sun for several months after a surgical procedure. The use of sun block helps. You should use protective clothing and sun block any time you are out in the sun anyway.

#### Antibiotics:

These days we try to avoid the use of antibiotics unless indicated. This is a medical decision. Some redness of an area is tolerated. When we do prescribe antibiotics one should take them as written and take all of them. You should never stop even when you think the infection is over. It is important to take them all, then stop.

Sometimes we schedule your next appointment for the day after your current prescription runs out. If more antibiotics are needed we will make that decision on that next appointment day. Other times we allow the antibiotics to run out several days or even weeks after your antibiotics were completed. We do this to see how things look after a period with no antibiotics.

The most common side effect is a little upset stomach. This can be reduced or eliminated by taking your antibiotics with food. Any medication may also change your bowel cycle. Mild changes are not unexpected.

Mild allergic symptoms include a body rash, usually with itching. A more severe response may be the development of welts or swelling. And in very severe cases there may be difficulty in breathing. In these cases you must call 911 immediately and go to the emergency room. You may need steroids and adrenaline injections. For lesser complications just call the doctor.

#### Most important:

You will hear all sorts of remedies from your neighbors and friends. They may be well meaning but do not do anything unless the doctor tells you to do so. And only do what the doctor tells you that you are able to do. If you ask the doctor to go swimming or play golf the answer is in the medical book - NO. We cannot go against the book. People may do sports or go swimming but we cannot recommend it during treatment. No, the ocean is not good, it is very very bad for your wounds. It is dirty and full of germs. Your home pool may be cleaner but the medical book says to stay out of it. If in your own mind you question something, that means that you should not do it. If you need to hear it from the doctor, call us. But in general, you will be told what you can and cannot do.