

## Caring for Sutures

### **What are sutures?**

Sutures – also called stitches - are special threads that health professionals use to close a wound to help it heal.

### **How can I care for my sutures?**

It's important to keep stitches clean and dry, especially for the first 48 hours.

After 48 hours, you can wet the area gently and briefly, for example in a sink or shower. Carefully pat the sutures dry immediately. Please note that, too much moisture can slow down the healing process.

The following tips can help you care for your sutures better:

- Do not soak in a bath or swim until the sutures are removed or have dissolved.
- Do not pick at the sutures or scabs — this may increase scarring. Scabs will fall off once the wound heals or when the stitches are removed.
- Only use creams and lotions recommended by your doctor.
- Avoid physical activities that might re-open the wound.

### **How long will my sutures stay?**

Sutures are often removed after 7 to 14 days. This depends on the type of wound and where it is.

### **When should I see my GP?**

Please present if you are worried or concerned about the wound is not healing properly. These signs include:

- redness that spreads or gets worse
- the wound starts to open or separates
- swelling or warmth around the area
- discharge, pus or a bad smell
- pain that doesn't get better
- a fever