

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Skin staples or clips are often substituted for surface sutures when cosmetic results are not a primary consideration, e.g., on the abdomen.
2. Pain Management:
 - a. Suggest premedication prior to visit if pain medication ordered by physician
3. Although the physician orders the removal of skin staples, there are general guidelines for timing the removal based on location:
 - a. Head and neck: 3 to 5 days after insertion
 - b. Chest and abdomen: 5 to 7 days after insertion
 - c. Lower extremities: 7 to 10 days after insertion
4. To assure all staples/clips are removed, count the observable staples before and after removal to ensure all are removed.
5. To provide incision line support, prevention of a wide scar, or slight skin separation, surgeons frequently order skin closure strips after the staples/clips are removed.

EQUIPMENT:

Gloves
Sterile staple remover or clip extractor
Alcohol or antiseptic wipes
Dressing and tape (if ordered)
Skin closure strips (if ordered)
Skin protectant
Sharps disposal container (large enough for staple remover)
Impervious trash bag

PROCEDURE:

1. Verify physician's orders.
2. Adhere to Standard Precautions, including gloves, and explain the procedure to patient/caregiver.
3. Monitor for patient discomfort during procedure.
4. Remove dressing using clean technique.
5. Discard dressing in impervious trash bag.
6. Examine the wound before removing staples:
 - a. Observe incision for gaping, drainage and signs of infection
 - b. If adequate healing has not taken place, notify the physician
 - c. Count the observable staples
7. Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.
8. Position the patient so that the suture area is without tension.
9. Assemble the necessary equipment at the bedside.
10. Open package containing sterile staple extractor.
11. Don clean gloves.
12. Cleanse the incision line gently with alcohol/antimicrobial wipes/sponges.

13. Using the sterile staple extractor, position the extractor's lower jaws beneath the width of the first staple or clip.
14. Squeeze the handle until the jaws are completely closed and the staple or clip is away from the skin. When bending the shape of the staple or clip, the extractor pulls the clip out of the skin.
15. Discard the removed staple or clip by holding the extractor over a paper towel and releasing the handle.
16. Remove every other staple along the incision line and observe for any gaping of the wound:
 - a. If gaping occurs, DO NOT remove any of the remaining staples
 - b. Apply skin closure strips to close the gap
 - c. Alert patient's physician
17. If no gaping occurs, continue removal until all staples have been removed.
18. Cleanse the suture line with antimicrobial sponges.
19. Count the number of staples on the paper towel.
20. Discard staples/clips and staple/clip remover in the sharps container.
21. If the physician has ordered, apply skin closure strips:
 - a. Apply skin protector to increase the length of strips' adherence
 - b. Apply strips. See procedure.
22. If the physician ordered, apply dry, sterile dressing secured with tape.
23. Discard soiled supplies in impervious trash receptacle.

AFTER CARE:

1. Document in patient's record:
 - a. Procedure performed
 - b. Description of incision line
 - c. Number of staples/clips removed
 - d. Patient's response to procedure
2. Instruct patient/caregiver on the healing of the incision line, including:
 - a. Changing the protective dressing each day or more frequently if wet or soiled
 - b. Reporting redness, discharge or other signs of infection
 - c. Showering or bathing, when permitted by physician
 - d. Protecting the incision line from direct sunlight for at least 6 months

REFERENCE:

Perry, A., Potter, P., & Elkin, M. (2012). Nursing Interventions & Clinical Skills. St. Louis: Elsevier.