

DAVID S. FELDMAN, MD

ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

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PIN CARE for EXTERNAL FIXATORS

The pins on an external fixator go through the skin and into the bone, which can give germs a direct way to get into the body and cause infection. This is why pin care and keeping pin sites clean is so important.

You may shower on postoperative day three and must shower daily to keep pin sites clean. Prior to cleaning individual pin sites, be sure to wash your hands!

→ Remove gauze or Acticoat octagons, as well as the xeroform (yellow dressing around each pin site) and all bandages. Using sterile saline solution can help remove bandages adhered to incisions or open pin sites. You should wash the pin sites with soap and water while in the shower. You may use an antibacterial soap such as Dial to wash the pin sites and fixator.

→ After showering and while the skin is still soft, use a sterile cotton tip applicator to brush off any scabs or crust surrounding the pin sites. Please use a new sterile cotton swab for each individual pin site. DO NOT insert the cotton swab below the level of the skin into the pin site. You may also use the water stream from a detachable shower head to remove debris that has formed around the pin sites. DO NOT let anything that touches one pin touch another; this includes gloves, gauze, cotton swabs, octagons etc. This can cause cross contamination.

→ After showering, re-wrap each pin site with sterile gauze or the Acticoat octagons. You may use silk tape or the orange clips around the pin to keep the gauze/Acticoat in place. If you were provided with Acticoat octagons, the black side goes face down and makes contact with the skin. The blue side faces outward. These dressings need to be changed daily after showering. Re-cover all incisions with sterile gauze and paper tape daily after each shower.

→ Once you are two weeks post-op, you may swim in the ocean or in a swimming pool.

→ It is typical for the pin sites to be pink in appearance or have a slight red discoloration to the

skin. It is also typical for them to drain a clear to yellow-tinged fluid on occasion. If you feel that you are developing signs or symptoms to suggest an infection (redness, warmth, tenderness, drainage that is yellow or white and cloudy in appearance, a fever, etc.) please contact one of our medical assistants in the clinic immediately.

- **Keisha Bourne, MA**
kbourne@paleyinstitute.org
(561) 844-5255 ext 240
- **Dalia Hanna, MA**
dhanna@paleyinstitute.org
(561) 844-5255 ext 243

→ If you are local, you can come into the clinic to be examined by one of the clinicians to determine if antibiotics need to be started. You may be discharged home with an antibiotic script in the event that you have developed an infection. Please fill this antibiotic if you have been instructed to do so by our office.

→ If you are out of town/state/country, please take a picture of the area(s) of concern and email it to the medical assistants. One of the clinicians will determine if antibiotics need to be started. If it is after business hours, please take a picture of the area of concern and email it to the on-call person that the call service will connect you to. In your email, please provide:

Patient Name

Date of Birth

Pharmacy Name and Number

Weight

Any Allergies

Taking care of an external fixator takes time and patience and for some children, it can seem overwhelming. Kaile Jo Scott, our certified Child Life Specialist, is available to provide support and advice on how to make pin care a little less scary and easier to understand. If you have questions or concerns regarding your child's experience with caring for their external fixator(s) please reach out to her.

- **Kaile-Jo Scott: kscott@paleyinstitute.org or (561) 334-9135**

If after surgery you need to reach us for a medical question, we can be reached at **(561) 844-5255**. There is someone on-call 24 hours 7 days a week. For medical emergencies, please call **911** and go to the nearest emergency room. If you are staying locally, St. Mary's Emergency Room is the most convenient for Dr. Feldman and his team to be involved in your care.