

WOUND DRESSINGS

Therapy Goals

When working with a patient immediately following an amputation, there are certain goals that occupational therapy practitioners should consider. Maintenance of range of motion, prevention of contractures, early mobilization, and functional mobility training are areas that should be covered during the postoperative timeframe.

(Kwasniewski et al., 2022)

Types of Dressings

Soft: non-adherent dressing with gauze pads and wrapping

Benefit: easy inspection of the incision site

Risk: not as compressive as other options

Semirigid: zink coated gauze

Benefits: provides more protection and more compression

Risk: requires skin checks only every 3 days

Rigid: plaster cast applied to residual limb

Benefit: good control of excess fluid in residual limb

Risk: high risk for pressure injuries can delay infection detection

(Kwasniewski et al., 2022; Rossbach, 2015)

Contractures

To prevent contractures from happening, it is best to keep the joint in full extension. It can also be helpful to provide range of motion exercises as wound healing permits. If an incision crosses a joint, educate and provide reminders to patients not to place a pillow underneath the area.

(Esquenazi & DiGiacomo, 2001; Kwasniewski et al., 2022; Standard of Care, 2011)

Postoperative Dressing Order

There is not a protocol for every postoperative amputation as the dressings are individualized on the patient and wound needs. The surgeon should be consulted for what protocol they have chosen for the patient. A general rule of thumb that is followed is listed below:

- Non-adherent dressing on the incision
- Sterile gauze pad(s)
- Rolled gauze to hold what is listed above in place
- Compression wrapping

An important reminder is that occupational therapy is responsible for educating the patient on how to don/doff the compression wrapping before going home.

(Kwasniewski et al., 2022)

References

- Esquenazi, A., & DiGiacomo, R. (2001). Rehabilitation after amputation. *Journal of American Podiatric Medical Association* 91(1):13-22. <https://doi-org/10.7547/87507315-91-1-13>
- Kwasniewski, M., & Mitchel, D. (2022). Post Amputation Skin and Wound Care. *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America*, 33(4), 857-870. <https://doi-org/10.1016/j.pmr.2022.06.010>
- Rossbach, P., Care of Your Wounds After Amputation Surgery. (2015). Amputee Coalition of America. <https://www.amputee-coalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Care-of-Your-Wounds-After-Amputation-Surgery.pdf>
- Standard of Care: Lower extremity Amputation. (2011). The Brigham and Women's Hospital, Inc., Department of Rehabilitation Services. <https://www.brighamandwomens.org/assets/BWH/patients-and-families/rehabilitation-services/pdfs/general-le-amputation-bwh.pdf>. Accessed October 4, 2021.