

SUTURING

General Principles

Thorough wound cleaning must be carried out before all suturing.
Do not close wounds if > 12hrs old. Clean and bring back for review.
Infiltrate with local anaesthetic prior to suturing
Local anaesthetic is one of the drugs you will use most often in A&E

Be familiar with dosages

Maximum safe dose of lignocaine is 3mg/kg body weight

1ml of 1% lignocaine = 10mg

Maximum safe doses (mg/kg)

Bupivacaine	2
Lignocaine	3
Prilocaine	6

Choice of sutures

Scalp 2/0 or 3/0 **silk**

Face 5/0 or 6/0 **ethilon**

Limbs 3/0 or 4/0 **ethilon**

Absorbable sutures **vicryl**

The smaller the suture size the thicker the suture material

Alternatives to sutures

Steristrips

Suitable for low tension application on smooth, non-hairy areas. Not suitable for use over joints. Inappropriate for use on eyebrows and scalps

Glue

Generally reserve for use in children. Can be used to close superficial sharp edged wounds. As noted above make sure wound is clean before application.

Staples

We have staple guns in the department. Used only very rarely e.g. to close scalp wounds in uncooperative patients where there may be risk of needlestick injury. They must not be used simply to save you some time. Again when using these the wounds must first be infiltrated with LA and thoroughly cleansed.

Specific wound guidance

Scalp Wounds

Infiltrate with LA. Thoroughly cleanse/irrigate. Remove all clots from the wound. Look for and document any breach in galea. Gentle feel for fracture with gloved digit. Close with silk sutures. Unless overtly infected wounds in scalp > 12hrs old can be closed

Eyebrows

Never shave the eyebrows

Lip Lacerations

Always align the vermillion border

‘V’ shaped lacerations

Put a tacking suture through the point of the ‘V’ to ensure appropriate alignment.

Pretibial Lacerations

These are well treated by the nurses who irrigate with saline and unroll the skin edges to appose as much as possible. Closed with steristrips. **DO NOT SUTURE**. Cover with silicon NA/padded crepe. Give crutches. Advise rest for 48hrs. GP nurse review.