**PURPOSE:**
To remove staples or clips after healing has occurred.

**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. 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.

**EQUIPMENT:**
- Gloves
- Sterile staple or clip extractor
- Alcohol or antimicrobial sponges
- Impervious trash bag
- Dressing and tape
- Butterfly strips
- Skin protectant

**PROCEDURE:**
1. Adhere to Standard Precautions.
2. Explain procedure to patient.
3. Use clean technique, remove dressings and discard in appropriate container.
4. Observe the wound for gaping, drainage and signs of infection. Ensure that proper healing has taken place and it is time to remove the staples.
5. Examine the wound before removing staples.
6. Position the patient so that the suture area is without tension.
7. Assemble the necessary equipment at the bedside.
   (Open package containing sterile staple extractor).
8. Cleanse the incision line gently with antimicrobial sponges.
9. Using the sterile staple extractor, position the extractor's lower jaws beneath the width of the first staple or clip.
10. Squeeze the handle until the jaws are completely closed and the staple or clip is away from the skin. By changing the shape of the staple or clip, the extractor pulls the clip out of the skin.
11. Discard the removed staple or clip by holding the extractor over the trash bag and releasing the handle. Remove every other staple along the incision line and observe for any gaping of the wound. If gaping occurs, DO NOT remove any of the remaining staples, apply butterfly strips and notify patient's physician. (See Integumentary-Application of Butterfly Strips.) If no gaping occurs, continue removal until all staples have been removed.
12. Cleanse the suture line with antimicrobial sponges.
13. For incision line support, prevention of a wide scar, or slight skin separation, butterfly strips may be used. Use skin protector to increase length of strips' adherence. Strips may be left in place 3 to 5 days.
14. Apply dry, sterile dressing secured with tape, if necessary.
15. Discard soiled supplies in appropriate containers.

**AFTER CARE:**
1. Document in patient's record:
   a. Procedure and observations.
   b. Patient's response to procedure.
2. Instruct patient/caregiver on healing of incision line, including:
   a. Reporting redness, discharge or other signs of infection.
   b. Changing the protective dressing.
   c. Showering or bathing, when permitted by physician.
   d. Protecting the incision line from direct sunlight for at least 6 months.

**REFERENCES:**
