

Caring for your wound after day surgery

Day Surgery Units

Information for Patients

Produced: November 2021

Review: November 2024

Leaflet number: 243 Version: 2

Introduction

This leaflet gives you advice about caring for your surgical wound once you leave hospital. Please also follow the advice given to you by your nurse when you're discharged.

A surgical wound is the cut made into the skin by the surgeon during an operation. At the end of the operation the cut is joined back together with either stitches, wound closure tape (steri-strips) or skin glue (tissue adhesive) to allow the skin edges to come together and heal.

Skin edges usually form a seal after 1 or 2 days. The time this takes varies from person to person and will depend on the type of surgery you have had.

It is important that your wound is kept dry for 2 days.

Will I need to attend an appointment to have my wound checked?

If you need to have your wound checked we will let you know as indicated below:

☐ Please arrange to have your wound checked by the Practice Nurse at your GP surgery in days time.

☐ Please go to the Burns & Plastics Dressings Clinic at the Leicester Royal Infirmary to have your wound checked on

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Wound dressings

A wound dressing is a sterile pad or compress applied to a wound to promote healing and protect the wound from further harm. Not all wounds need dressings. The purpose of a dressing is to:

- absorb any leakage from the wound.
- provide ideal conditions for healing.
- protect the area until the wound is healed.
- prevent stitches (if you have any) from catching on clothing.

If you have a dressing on your wound, you can remove this in days.

If the wound is healing it can be left without a dressing. Some people prefer to have a dressing on to cover the wound for protection, especially when clothing can rub against it.

Changing the dressing on your wound

The original dressing can be left in place for 2 days (or as advised by your nurse/ doctor, as long as it is not oozing). If the dressing gets wet from blood or any other liquid, it must be changed.

Preparing to change the dressing:

- Wash your hands with soap and water, especially your palms and between your fingers. Dry hands with a clean towel/ kitchen roll.
- Gather what you will need - new dressing, clean pair of scissors (if needed for cutting the dressing to size), waste bag for the dirty dressing.
- Clean the table/ surface where you are going to put the new dressing packet on.
- Prepare your dressing by opening the packet but do not remove from the packet until you are ready to apply it.
- Wash your hands again.

How to remove the old dressing:

- Carefully take off the dirty dressing without touching the used side. Do not touch the healing wound with your fingers.
- If the dressing is stuck to the wound, soak with some water and wait for the dressing to loosen – allow a bit of time and avoid pulling as this will be painful and could damage your wound.
- Place the dirty dressing into the waste bag and wash your hands again.

How to clean your wound and apply a new dressing:

- You can clean your wound and surrounding skin with tap water. Do not touch the healing wound with your fingers.
- Make sure the wound and surrounding skin are fully dry using a clean towel to pat the wound.
- Apply the new dressing on to your wound following instructions that came with the dressing. Take care not to touch the inside of the new dressing so that it stays clean.
- Do not use antiseptic cream under the dressing, as the skin can get too wet and this will delay healing.

If you need more dressings, you will need to purchase these from your local pharmacy.

If your wound continues to ooze or you have any concerns, talk to your GP/ Practice Nurse.

When can I have a bath or shower?

It is usually best to wait 24 hours before having a bath or shower but this will depend on the operation you have had. Ask your nurse or doctor for advice. Try to keep the wound as dry as possible.

- Showering is better than having a bath. Soaking the wound might soften the scar tissue and re-open the wound. Make sure the water is not too hot and the force of the water is not too fast.
- Do not put any soap, shower gel, body lotion, talcum powder or other bathing products directly onto your wound.
- Do not worry if you splash the wound but do not rub the wound area as this will cause pain and might delay the healing process.
- Pat the wound gently with a clean towel after having a bath or shower.
- If you have a dressing over your wound that gets wet, it must be changed. Follow the instructions on the previous page. You may want to time your bath/ shower for when you need a dressing change.

Stitches

You may have had stitches to close your wound. These are also known as sutures. Some types of stitches have to be taken out, but some don't need to be removed because they dissolve.

If you are told you need to have stitches removed, the nurse will give you a letter to give to the Practice Nurse at your GP's surgery. You will need to arrange an appointment with your GP surgery for your Practice Nurse to do this.

☐ **Dissolvable stitches have been used to close your wound. These stitches dissolve by themselves and do not need to be removed.**

☐ **Stitches have been used to close your wound which need to be removed. Please make an appointment to see the Practice Nurse at your GP surgery in days time.**

If the stitches are causing you pain or discomfort, contact your GP or Practice Nurse for advice. Otherwise, wait for the stitches to be removed or for them to fall off or dissolve.

Managing pain

Some pain is normal especially within the first week after your operation. Controlling pain is important for comfort and your recovery. Some painkiller tablets may interact with medications that you already take at home. Talk to your doctor and nurse about which painkillers are best for you to take before you are discharged home.

Remember to only take medication for pain relief as instructed. If your pain dramatically increases or is not responding to pain relief, please seek medical advice by contacting your GP or the NHS helpline service on 111.

Looking out for signs of an infection

Most wounds heal without any problems. However, a common complication after an operation is an infection in the wound. It is important that you know how to tell if you are developing an infection after you go home. If a wound becomes infected:

- it may become more painful.
- it may look red or swollen.
- it may ooze or leak pus, blood or blood stained liquid (some oozing from the wound is normal and may stain your dressing).
- it may have an unpleasant smell.
- you may develop a temperature or feel feverish and generally unwell.

If you notice any of these signs or have any concerns, contact your GP or Practice Nurse straight away. For advice out of normal GP working hours, contact the NHS helpline on 111 who will direct you to the most appropriate service.

How can I tell if my wound is healing?

Wounds heal in stages. Your wound may become slightly swollen, red or pink and tender. You may also see some clear fluid oozing from the wound. This fluid helps clean the area. You may get a scab that forms, this is your body's way of protecting your wound from infection. As your wound heals, the skin edges pull inward and the wound gets smaller.

As healing continues, you may notice that your wound becomes itchy which is a normal part of the healing process. Do not scratch or rub the area as this may delay healing.

You may get a scar that forms because the new tissue grows back differently than the original tissue, but it will be smaller than your wound.

General advice

- If your surgery was on your face, do not wear make-up over the scar until it has fully healed.
- Avoid swimming until your wound has healed and stitches have dissolved or been removed.
- Once your wound has healed you can apply a non-perfumed moisturiser 3 to 4 times a day. This may help reduce scarring.
- Your healing wound/ scar will be very sensitive to strong sunlight and can burn easily. Make sure you cover the area when in the sun or apply a factor 50 sun cream for protection.

Who can I contact if I need further advice?

For any further advice, contact your GP or Practice Nurse. Out of normal GP working hours, contact the NHS helpline service on 111 who will direct you to the most appropriate service.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk