

Care of your Stitched Wound after your operation

Relief of pain

The local anaesthetic that you have had will wear off over the next 1 to 2 hours. You may need to take simple pain relief, e.g. Paracetamol as directed on the manufacturer's packet to cover the next 12 to 24 hours. Aspirin should be avoided as it increases your risk of post-operative bleeding.

Bleeding

The operation site will be checked for bleeding before you leave the department. If bleeding occurs at home, do not disturb the dressing. Apply a pad to the area and apply constant, firm pressure for a full 10 minutes. If possible, elevate or raise the area, e.g. arm or leg. If a small amount of bleeding persists apply pressure again for another full 10 minutes. If the wound is still bleeding, you will need to visit your **practice nurse** or **local Emergency Department** for assessment. If bleeding occurs Monday to Friday 9-5 you can contact the **Dermatology Department**. A clean dressing will be provided once bleeding has settled if this is necessary.

Be vigilant for bleeding if you take anticoagulants, e.g. Aspirin or Warfarin.

Remember to take your practice nurse letter with you when you see the practice nurse.

Stitches

Stitches or sutures will normally be removed at your own surgery by the practice nurse (5 to 14 days - your practice nurse letter has these details). You will need to book an appointment

with the practice nurse well in advance of needing stitches removed or dressings renewed (details of the dates are supplied in your practice nurse letter).

If you are concerned about discomfort when the stitch is removed, consider taking simple pain relief, e.g. Paracetamol, an hour before your appointment. Steristrips (sticky strips) may be applied over the wound following suture removal to help support the wound.

Remember once your stitches have been removed the wound may appear healed but it will not be strong. It can take several months for skin to regain its strength and flexibility. Treat the area with care.

A greasy ointment, e.g. Vaseline, can be applied directly over the stitches twice daily. The wound should be washed prior to applying Vaseline. This helps to prevent and lift crusting; massaging gently over the wound may help to improve the appearance of scarring. We recommend buying a new pot of Vaseline to prevent contamination to the wound.

Sport or activity

On the first day you should rest if possible. Remember you have had a small operation and going shopping does not count as rest! Sport is best avoided for the next 7 days and up to 2 weeks if your skin sample has come from a place located over 'active' muscles, especially the legs or shoulders. Stretched stitches may result in a bumpy scar or cause a wound to gape or open. Sometimes wounds on the chest and upper back become lumpy. This is called keloid scarring and is unavoidable.

Bathing

Bathing should be avoided for the first 48 hours. If the dressing becomes wet it should be removed. Wash your hands and apply a clean dressing. A wet dressing increases your risk of infection. After 48 hours it is recommended to wash the wound with tap water and pat dry.

The pathology result

The dermatology doctor will write to your GP explaining the result and any further treatment or action needed. We will send you a copy of the letter.

Complications

The signs of infection can be any of the following:

- increasing pain at the site;
- swelling;
- redness;
- a pus-like discharge.

If you are concerned about any of the above, see your practice nurse promptly, taking with you your practice nurse letter. **Your practice nurse is the first point of contact.** The practice nurse will be able to assess your wound if you suspect it is infected. If your practice nurse has concerns they can contact us.

Feedback

Comments and suggestions that give us feedback on our practice, e.g. delays in wound healing, pain or dressing problems, (and the good things as well) are helpful. You can contact us by writing to Clare Parkinson, Dermatology, Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Heavitree), Gladstone Road, Exeter EX1 2ED, if you think we could make a difference for others.

Tel: 01392 405516 (Nursing)

or 01392 405511 (Administration)

Answerphone, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

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