



# Your discharge from Sonning Ward

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**This leaflet aims to answer your questions about your hospital discharge. If, after reading this, you still have queries, then please ask to speak to your named nurse or the nurse in charge.**

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## **Pain**

It is likely that after leaving hospital you will experience some pain. You may have been given painkillers or other medication to take home with you, please ensure you follow the instructions. If you have no prescribed painkillers we generally advise patients to buy 'over the counter' products such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen. If your pain increases or the painkillers are not working effectively, your GP will be able to help.

## **Wounds**

If you have a surgical wound, it will continue to heal after your discharge. The following symptoms are quite common and normal for the healing process; Tingling; itching or numbness around the wound; a small, hard lumpy feeling around the wound; Scabs, which form to protect the healing site (it is important to leave these alone).

Please seek help if you have any of the following:

- Your wound starts to leak fluid.
- Your wound and surrounding area becomes red, hot or swollen.
- Your wound appears to open up.

## **When to seek medical advice following abdominal surgery**

In addition to the advice outlined above, if you have had any abdominal surgery and experience any of the following symptoms after discharge, please contact the ward that you were discharged from, if it is within 72 hours. After 72 hours, contact your GP or the nearest Emergency Department for advice:

- Increasing abdominal pain that is not controlled by painkillers.
- Problems passing urine.
- Bloating abdomen.
- Fevers or chills.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Reduction in appetite.
- Pain, redness or swelling in either calf.

## **Laparoscopic surgery**

After laparoscopic surgery it is common to experience 'wind/gas pain'. This may involve sharp pain under the ribs and shoulders and is a common side effect due to the carbon dioxide used to inflate the abdomen during the procedure. It can last for a few days post-surgery; it will dissipate on its own when the body absorbs the gas. Walking helps to encourage the bowels to expel the gas, hot peppermint tea and a heat pack can also help to relieve the pain.

## **Vaginal surgery**

If you have had vaginal surgery, you may have stitches inside your vagina. These do not need to be removed because the stitches will dissolve on their own, usually within six weeks. It is normal to have some light vaginal bleeding or pink to brown or yellow coloured vaginal discharge as the stitches dissolve. It is better to avoid putting anything into the vagina until completely healed, doing this can increase the risk of infection and interfere with healing. This includes tampons, douches, fingers and all types of sexual activity that involve the vagina.

## **Sutures / stitches**

In general, you stitches will be dissolvable and will dissolve in approximately two to three weeks. If after three weeks you can still feel some stitches, we advise that you visit your GP practice nurse, who can remove these. If you do have stitches or clips that need to be removed by a nurse, we will advise you on when this needs to be done. Please phone your GP surgery as soon as possible to arrange this. If you have clips, please ensure that the nurse gives you a clip remover to take home with you.

## **Wound dressings**

Your surgical wound may be covered in a waterproof dressing or glue, it is fine to shower with this dressing in situ. It is better to avoid soaps and getting it too wet until fully healed.

Laparoscopic dressings can be removed around day four post operatively; longer laparotomy dressings stay in place for seven days. If you have a 'PICO' dressing your nurse will advise you how to care for this and arrange for its removal.

## **Vaginal bleeding**

It is very common to experience some bleeding from the vagina after gynaecological surgery. In general this should last for about 7 to 10 days. Please use a sanitary pad and NOT a tampon. The bleeding should slowly reduce and become lighter in colour. Please inform the ward (up to 72 hours post op), or your GP if you notice the following: a sudden increase in this bleeding; passing large clots; smelly discharge or flu-like symptoms.

## **Resting / Sleep**

After surgery, it is completely normal to feel much more tired than usual. It is advisable to gradually build up your activities and allow yourself to rest for short periods throughout the day. You may also find it more difficult to sleep at night, due to pain when moving in bed, or change of routine. It may be helpful to take some painkillers before going to bed, also, an extra pillow may help you to reposition yourself while in bed.

## **Getting about once you return home**

After leaving hospital, getting about may be difficult, tiring and even painful. It is very important to balance periods of activity with rest, to reduce the risk of complications such as deep vein thrombosis (DVTs) and chest infection. Equally, try to avoid being completely inactive. Gently increase the amount of activities that you are doing every day until you reach your normal level of mobility. When you first get home after your surgery you may also find it difficult to do household jobs such as vacuuming, washing up and carrying and unpacking shopping. These activities may pull on your wound or may make you feel tired and sore. It is a good idea to get family and friends to help you with these jobs for the first couple of weeks.

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

A Armstrong, Senior Staff Nurse, April 2024

Next review due: April 2026