

Wound care after surgery (stitches)

This leaflet explains things that you can do to look after your wound to lower the chance of infection and encourage healing.

- **Keep the wound clean and dry for the first 48 hours**. If there is a dressing in place, leave this alone, providing that it is dry and not soaked with any other liquid. After this period, the top dressing can be removed.
- Before removing the dressing, you must wash your hand with soap and water and then carefully take the dressing off. Do not touch the wound with your fingers. You will be advised if further dressings are needed. **Leave the steri-strips, if applied, until it comes off on its own or if possible until the sutures are removed.**
- Your wound may be a little painful for the first few days. Paracetamol can be taken as required up to every 6 hours.
- Slight post-operative bleeding may stain the dressing but requires no action. **However, if the bleeding is heavy, place some gauze on top of the original dressing and apply firm pressure for 10-15 minutes.** We advise you to set a timer to ensure the adequate time has elapsed.
- **Surgery, especially around the eye or on the forehead, can result in bruising**, which requires no treatment and will disappear over the course of a fortnight.
- Most surgical wounds heal without causing any problems. However, wound infections are one of the most common complications after surgery. This means that germs have started to grow in the wound, which can delay normal wound healing. Wound infections are usually treated with a course of antibiotics. **If the wound, after a few days, becomes more painful, looks red, inflamed or swollen, leaks liquid, pus or blood or smells unpleasant, then you should contact your GP or practice nurse as soon as possible.**
- **You must arrange to have the stitches removed, as instructed and noted at the end of this information letter.** Call your GP surgery to book this with your practice nurse unless you have been asked to come back to Royal Berkshire Hospital.
- After suture removal, the wound will look a little red and scabbed. Do not pick the scab or force its removal.
- Once the scabbing has settled and the wound is no longer tender, regular massage with Vaseline or any moisturiser 2-3 times a day will help to flatten the edges, reduce the redness and the scar blend into the surrounding skin.
- The scar will take up to 3 months to settle down completely.
- If the scar is in an area that is prone to excess stretching (e.g. the back), then extra care should be taken especially after the stitches are removed and it may be sensible to cover the scar with steri-strips for a further fortnight.
- **You will receive a letter with the result of your tests within 4-6 weeks. Your GP will be informed at the same time.** If you do not receive that letter, please contact us or your doctor to chase it up for you.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or worries you may have with your doctor.

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| Suture removal (to be arranged by yourself) | |
| Date of surgical procedure: | |
| Location of surgical procedure: | |
| Number of stitches: | |
| Date of stitch removal and by whom: | |

Contacting us

Dermatology Clinical Admin Team (CAT 8): 0118 322 8145 (Option 1)

or email: rbb-tr.cat8dermatology@nhs.net

Dermatology (West Berkshire Community Hospital): 01635 273417.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

RBFT Dermatology, August 2003

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