

## Care of your stitched wound after your surgery

### What should I do if I feel any discomfort?

It is normal to feel sore and swollen after skin surgery when the local anaesthetic wears off (in around one to three hours). We suggest you take Paracetamol when you get home, and then as required up to the maximum permitted dose.

Aspirin and Ibuprofen should be avoided unless prescribed by your doctor, as they can increase your risk of post-operative bleeding.

### What should I do if my wound bleeds?

- Leave the dressing in place. Use a clean pad (such as a wad of 10-20 clean paper handkerchiefs) over the dressing and apply firm continuous pressure for 20 minutes.
- Do not dab or keep looking at the wound – maintaining pressure is very important.
- If possible, elevate/raise the area.
- If a small amount of bleeding persists, apply pressure for another 20 minutes.

If you have heavy bleeding that does not stop, contact the Dermatology Department on **01392405510** (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm). After hours / bank holiday, please attend your local Emergency Department.

- When any bleeding has stopped, if the dressing is bloodstained, put a new dressing in place, as leaving a blood-stained dressing in place can increase the risk of infection.

### How do I care for my wound?

To help reduce the risk of bleeding, infection or poor healing after your surgery, we advise you to:

- Keep your wound dry and covered for 2 to 3 days. Then remove the dressing and wash the wound with tap water and mild soap, gently pat dry, then apply petroleum jelly (e.g. Vaseline) using a clean finger or cotton bud.
- Try to leave the area alone/ don't press/ lean on or rub the area for the first 2-3 days.
- Rest and avoid strenuous activities straight after the procedure and for the next few days. A further period of reduced activity may also be sensible.
- Where possible, raise the treated area. We may have suggested a compression stocking to speed up the healing on leg wounds. If the wound is on the head, avoid stooping / bending down too much. Consider using an extra pillow in bed.
- Avoid smoking/ vaping or excessive alcohol for 2 weeks before and after surgery as they can affect healing.

### What should I do if my wound becomes infected?

As with any surgery, there is a risk of infection. If this occurs, it generally happens within 3 to 7 days after the surgery.

Signs of infection at the site can be any of the following:

- An increase in pain or tenderness
- Redness
- Swelling
- Heat
- Leakage of pus / blood stained fluid.

If you are concerned about any of the above, **see your practice nurse promptly**. The practice nurse will be able to assess your wound if you suspect it is infected. If your practice nurse has concerns or is unsure, then they can contact us. If you can't get a same day appointment with your practice nurse or a local Walk-in Centre **then contact us on 01392 405516 and leave a message.**

## How will I know when my wound is healed?

Healing of closed, stitched wounds happens in stages:

1. The skin surface seals together within one to two weeks.
2. The deeper skin edges knit together over weeks to months, helped by any deep dissolvable stitches that may have been placed. During this phase it is common for deep stitches to move to the surface, where they may be noticeable. If this happens you can snip any loose ends off, but don't attempt to pull the stitch out.
3. The whole scar matures in strength and appearance over one year or more. Larger wounds, or those in more mobile areas of the body, are at greater risk of bursting apart in the first weeks, so they need greater care. Even if the scar is quite red or lumpy at first, the colour and texture tends to continue to fade and flatten for several months.

## When will I know my pathology result?

It takes on average 4 to 5 weeks to have the results back in the department after your surgery. We will be in touch with the results. If after six weeks you have not heard from us, please contact the Dermatology Department on **01392405510**.

## Contact us:

If you have any questions please contact the Dermatology Department, Level 1, Royal Devon University Hospital (Heavitree), Gladstone Road, Exeter, EX1 2ED

**Our phone number: 01392405510**

**Alternative number: 01392405516**

(Leave a message for a member of the team to contact you)

Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm

Useful websites for support / further information:

- [www.skincareaction.org.uk](http://www.skincareaction.org.uk)
- [www.macmilan.org.uk](http://www.macmilan.org.uk)
- [www.dermnet.org.nz](http://www.dermnet.org.nz)
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/nhs-stop-smoking-services-help-you-quit/>

If you need further help with information, advice or support, you can contact the Royal Devon University Hospital Patient Advice and Liaison Service.

**[rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net)**

**Tel: 01392302093**

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

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