

Care of your wound after minor surgery

This leaflet gives information and advice on caring for your wound after plastic surgery at Reading, Thatcham or Oxford.

General information

- After your operation under local anaesthetic, you will find that the area of operation will remain numb for a period of time, usually 3-4 hours. Occasionally, this may be longer. The skin around the operation site will normally look white. This colour change is due to the local anaesthetic and the adrenaline contained within it. Normal colour will return after a few hours, as the local anaesthetic wears off. Some discomfort may be experienced around the area at this stage. Mild pain relief may be required, such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen. Please avoid using Aspirin, because this can cause bleeding at the site. You may also notice slight swelling and bruising around the area. This should gradually decrease as the area heals.
- The operation site is usually covered by thin paper strips (Micropore or 'Steri-strips'). If the dressings do get wet, do not worry – pat dry, rather than rub vigorously. If the dressings fall off completely, again, do not worry. A simply Elastoplast replacement will usually suffice, or replace with Micropore if available. In most circumstances, the wound can be left without any dressings at all. Any complex dressings will have been explained to you by the surgeon at the time of your operation.
- Slight post-operative bleeding may stain the dressing but requires no action. If, however, bleeding is heavy, place another dressing on top of the original one and apply firm pressure for 10 minutes. If bleeding continues contact us or your GP surgery for advice.
- If your wound becomes painful, red and inflamed several days after the initial discomfort has ceased, infection may be present and you should contact us, your GP or practice nurse as soon as possible.
- Unless you have been told otherwise, the sutures (stitches) should be removed by the nurse at your GP's surgery. You will need to arrange this yourself. Some stitches are absorbable (dissolvable) and do not need removing. Your surgeon will let you know what type of stitches you have at the time of your surgery.

Surgery to specific areas

- Surgery to the mouth or lips – Because of the numbing effect of the local anaesthetic, hot drinks or food should be avoided until the anaesthetic has worn off.
- Surgery to face or head – Avoid leaning forward, stooping, bending or straining on the day of surgery, as this may cause the area to bleed. Please use an extra pillow on the night of surgery, sleeping a little more upright, which will help reduce any swelling.
- Surgery on foot or lower leg – Once home, you should elevate your legs and rest as much as possible for the first 24 hours. During the first 48 hours, long periods of standing should be avoided. You may also find driving painful during the first 48 hours and may be instructed not to drive during this period.
- Surgery to arm and hand – You may need to wear a sling for a short period. You should elevate your arm or raise it on pillows for the first 24 hours if a sling is not worn.
- Surgery to body – The area will be covered with a dressing. This will usually allow you to shower and wash normally. You should avoid any heavy lifting or sport until after your next hospital appointment.

Follow up

- If required, you will receive a follow up appointment to discuss any test results with a member of the Plastic Surgery Team. Test results can take up to one month to return. Your GP usually has access to these test results and maybe able to discuss them with you if you have concerns.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or worries you may have with your doctor. If you encounter any problems please contact us on the phone numbers below.

Department of Plastic Surgery

Royal Berkshire Hospital
0118 322 7083

West Berkshire Community
Hospital
01635 273390

John Radcliffe Hospital
01865 231173

Alternatively, call the ward or unit you were discharged from:

Adult Day Surgery Unit (ADSU): 0118 322 7622

Dorrell Ward: 0118 322 7172 / 8101

Visit the Trust website at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Based upon information from Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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