

Removing metal jewellery and acrylic nails before an operation

Removing metal jewellery

You will be asked to remove metal jewellery before your operation because it may be necessary to use diathermy. Diathermy is an electric current that is used to seal bleeding blood vessels. If you are wearing any metal, such as jewellery, and it comes into contact with fluid (e.g. blood, amniotic fluid or antiseptic solution) during the use of diathermy, it could cause the metal to 'short', resulting in burns. The surgeon would be unaware of this and you would not be able to feel the burning due to your anaesthetic.

We strongly recommend that you replace metal piercings, particularly tongue studs, with plastic jewellery inserted into the piercing as this can remain in place during an operation, and in the case of an emergency will save time. In some cases, it may increase the risk of infection so you may be asked to remove it completely. Your surgical team will be happy to advise.

Before your operation you will be asked to remove all jewellery and body piercings. The only exception to this is made for wedding rings, which must be covered with surgical tape.

Removing acrylic nails

The anaesthetist will need to monitor the oxygen levels in your blood during the operation. This is done by placing a plastic probe onto your finger, which will not work properly over acrylic nails.

What if I refuse to remove my jewellery/acrylic nails?

It is your decision to make. If you do decide not to remove your jewellery/acrylic nails you will be required to sign a consent form stating it is your choice not to remove your metal jewellery/acrylic nails and that you accept the associated risks in doing so. The Trust would not be liable for any injury caused by failure to remove the items.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Antenatal Services Manager, March 2004

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