

Further information

If you have any concerns or would like further information regarding how to look after your wound, please call:

The dermatology clinic
Tel: 020 7288 5062
Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm

At other times, please seek advice from your local GP or call NHS 111 service

Looking after your wound following skin surgery (with stitches)

A patient's guide

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This leaflet aims to answer any questions you may have after your skin surgery.

Looking after your dressing (showering and bathing)

Keep your dressing in place and dry for two days. You can still wash but avoid getting the wound wet. Do not soak the wound in the bath or swim until the stitches have been removed.

After two days, you can have a shower (not bath). Remove the wet dressing and clean the wound gently with soap. Lightly pat the wound dry and then apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly (e.g. Vaseline®). This will help keep the wound moist and allow it to heal faster with less scarring. A waterproof plaster can be re-applied if necessary.

Repeat this on a daily basis until the stitches are removed. In some instances you will be asked to leave the dressing on for longer.

Removal of stitches

You have _____ stitches. Please make an appointment with the nurse at your GP practice to have these removed in _____ days.

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

If you have paper strips over the wound, you can remove them when your dressing is taken off. They are easier to remove when wet.

Some stitches are dissolvable and will disappear by themselves in a few weeks. You will be advised if this is the case.

Bleeding

Slight oozing or spotting of blood on the dressing is normal. However, if you experience heavy bleeding, apply firm, continual pressure to the area for 20 minutes. This will usually stop the bleeding. If bleeding continues, repeat continual pressure for a further 20 minutes. If bleeding still persists, please contact the dermatology department or your GP for advice.

Pain

The local anaesthetic will usually wear off in one or two hours. If you are in pain, we recommend you take paracetamol as instructed by the doctor or nurse. It is best to avoid ibuprofen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) as pain killers as they can enhance bleeding. Do not stop your aspirin or other blood thinning drugs unless instructed by your doctor.

Infection

We take every precaution before, during and after your procedure to prevent a wound infection. Despite this, some wounds will still become infected. Symptoms include an unpleasant smell, discharge, fever, pain, swelling and redness. If this occurs please contact your GP or the dermatology department.

General information

Swelling and bruising

Swelling and bruising may occur, especially if you have had surgery around the face and eyes. This can take 10-14 days to start reducing. If swelling occurs, then resting and sleeping on an extra pillow can help reduce the swelling.

Smoking

Smoking affects wound healing. You are advised to stop or reduce your smoking during the healing process.

Scarring

You should avoid physical activities that put a strain on the scar for two or three weeks. After the stitches have been removed, massage the scar gently with a moisturiser to help it settle.

Numbness

It may feel numb around the scar. This usually improves with time.