

## WOUND CARE AFTER SURGERY

**This leaflet tells you about caring for your surgical wound after you leave hospital.**

After surgery, you will need to take care of the incision as it heals. Doing so may limit scarring, may help you avoid pain or discomfort, and may help lower the risk of problems like infection.

### How is the wound closed?

After surgery, your wound may be closed with stitches, staples (clips) or adhesive strips. Sometimes small strips of tape are put across the wound to hold the edges together. This may be used alone or with stitches. You can leave these alone until they fall off.

- Dissolving (absorbable) stitches usually disappear in 2-3 weeks.
- Clips or non-dissolvable sutures need to be removed between 7-14 days depending on the site of the operation.

The doctor/nurse will tell you on the day of discharge when to have the stitches removed and you will be given a letter/appointment about removing the stitches/staples.

### How do I care for my wound?

- Keep the wound clean and dry for the first 72 hours.
- Showering or sponge baths are preferable to bathing. Some waterproof dressings can be left in place whilst you take a shower.
- Do not put any soap, shower gel, body lotion, talcum powder or other bathing products directly onto the healing wound.
- Do not worry if you splash the wound, but do not scrub or rub the wound area as this will cause pain and might delay the healing process.
- Pat the wound dry gently with a clean towel after showering.

### How long will healing take?

Healing depends on your general health and the type of surgery you had. In healthy children and adults, most wounds heal within 2 weeks. Healing will probably take longer if you have a health problem such as diabetes, are taking certain drugs (such as steroids or chemotherapy drugs), or have a weakened immune system as in HIV. Smoking and obesity also contribute to poor wound healing.

### When can I get back to normal?

Moving around is good for you, but while your wound is healing, avoid placing any strain on it. Also avoid bending, lifting, or being too active.

### Problems with wound healing?

– Contact us or go to your GP if you experience any of the following:

- Chills, or fever over 38°C.
- Warmth, swelling, redness, or worsening pain at the wound.
- Pus, a bad smell, or more drainage from the wound.
- A feeling of hardness or fullness around the wound or any opening of stitches or staples.