



Information for patients and carers

Post-Operative Surgical Wound Care

Information for patients being discharged home
from the vascular ward

You are shortly going to be discharged from hospital and it is important you read this leaflet on how best to care for your recent surgical site (operation wound); how to reduce the risk of developing an infection and what action you can take if you think you may have an infection.

What is a surgical site infection?

Your skin is the largest organ of your body. One of its functions is to protect your body from germs that are all around us.

A surgical site infection develops when germs from the environment or the skin enters the part of the body where the surgery took place. Infections may be superficial just involving the skin, but they can become more serious and can involve tissues under the skin, organs or implanted materials, such as bypass graft and prosthetic patches.

When do surgical site infections develop?

Surgical site infections usually occur within 3-7 days after the procedure but sometimes they occur within 30 days after surgery. Surgery which involved implanted material, infection can occur up to one year after the operation.

What increases the risk of a surgical site infection?

You are more likely to develop a wound infection:

- If you have pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, obesity and malnutrition
- If you smoke as it causes constriction of the blood flow
- In certain areas of the body where there are higher levels of flora (germs) such as the groin. These areas are more likely to develop a surgical site infection
- The longer the operation

- With increasing age
- If you take steroids

How to take care of your surgical site

- Follow the care instructions you are given by your health care provider
- Daily inspection of visible areas of the wound for redness and swelling
- Keep the dressings clean and dry, it is safe to use tap water to clean the wounds 48 hours after surgery
- Wash your hands before cleaning the surgical site or changing the dressings
- Dressings are designed to allow perspiration and allow sufficient aeration of the skin
- When special dressings are used follow the specific instructions given to you
- Make sure to take your medication and follow any medication instructions you are given
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Avoid smoking
- Good diabetes control can improve the rate at which a wound heals and reduce the risk of developing a severe infection
- Do not put anything like ointment on the surgical site, unless a health care professional tells you to
- You can safely shower 48 hours after surgery unless advised differently from one of the team. Washing the wound with simple soap and water can reduce the number of germs on the skin. It is important to ensure the skin is completely dry following a shower
- In order to reduce the risk of a surgical site infection one dose of antibiotic just before surgery may be given. Please ask the discharging nurse if you prefer to know whether you received a dose of antibiotics or not at the time of surgery

How would I know if I had a wound infection?

You would see the following symptoms:

- Swelling, redness and increased pain around the wound site
- Pus forming in or around the wound
- Feeling generally unwell
- A high temperature of 38°C or above
- Swollen glands under your chin, neck, armpits or groin
- You can develop a small haematoma or oozing of blood into the tissues which can look like a bruise and can last several weeks before it disappears. These bruises can become slightly tense and uncomfortable before they get absorbed

What should I do if I develop any of these symptoms at home?

If you develop any of these symptoms, you need to contact your GP or call 111. If you are struggling to speak to a medical professional, you can contact the ward where you have been discharged from or the vascular nurse specialists.

What will happen if I develop a wound infection?

Your nurse or doctor may take a wound swab to send to the laboratory for testing. You may be given antibiotics to treat the infection.

Additional information given to you by your discharging nurse

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Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:

Ward 15 – 01772 523897

Vascular Nurse Specialists – 01772 523757

(Monday-Friday 08.30-17.00 excluding bank holidays)

Hospital switchboard - 01772 716565 and ask them to bleep 4605/4606

Sources of further information

- www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk
- www.nhs.uk
- www.accessable.co.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad
Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણામાં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi.”

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دوسری زبانوں اور ریڈی اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات سمجھنے کے لیے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو
یہی چھپا دیں یہی ابی دست ہو یسکت ہے براے مہر یان پوے چھدی معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعة بأحرف كبيرة و بلغات إذا كنت تريد مساعدة في فهم هذه المعلومات يرجى أن تطلب
أخرى يملكن تو فير هذه المعلومات

Department: Vascular

Division: Surgery

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