



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Stitch or dressing advice

**Department of Maxillofacial Surgery**

## **Will I need to take extra care after my operation ?**

It is very important that you rest for at least 48 hours after your operation.

You will need to avoid any activities like shopping, cycling, and dog walking or anything that will push up your blood pressure. If your operation is to your head or face, avoid bending down and try to sleep on two pillows for the first couple of nights to keep your head raised. This will help reduce any swelling or bleeding. If the operation is to your leg, it is important that you rest your leg whenever possible by keeping your leg raised until the wound has completely healed. You need to avoid swimming, sports/exercise, heavy lifting and heavy manual labour for a minimum of two weeks, or until the wound is fully healed.

## **What do I need to do with my dressings?**

You will need to keep all your dressings clean and dry and in place until your stitches or dressing needs to be removed.

## **What should I do if the wound starts to bleed?**

It is normal to expect some oozing of blood from the wound. If you notice any bleeding, apply constant pressure with a clean cloth for 15 to 20 minutes (keep the pressure on continually). It should eventually stop, but if for any reason you are unable to stop the bleeding, please go to your nearest Accident and Emergency department.

## **What should I take for pain?**

We recommend regular paracetamol for pain relief if your wound is painful. Avoid Aspirin as this can increase the risk of bleeding.

## How will I know if I have an infection in my wound?

Infection can be a complication of any operation and usually appears 2-7 days after the procedure. If you notice increasing pain, redness and swelling or you feel generally unwell please see your GP as soon as possible, as you may need a prescription for some antibiotics.

## If you have internal stitches

Occasionally, internal stitches may pop out of the wound edge 2-3 weeks after the operation. Simply lift up the end of the stitch and cut the stitch flush with the wound. If you are unsure, please make an appointment with your Practice Nurse.

### Immediate appearance

All skin surgery produces a scar. The scar will initially be raised and red but this will improve as the healing process settles down. This should eventually result in a fine line but occasionally you may experience stitch marks, a depressed scar, a raised scar (keloid), changes of skin colour or a stretched scar. Prominent scars are most likely to develop on the upper back, chest and lower leg.

### Late appearance

The cosmetic appearance of the scar will continue to improve for up to 18 months. Massaging a moisturiser such as E45 or Vaseline Intensive Care Lotion into the area twice a day for two to three months may help soften the scar tissue and aid the healing process. Wound strength takes four to six weeks to develop and up to 18 months to fully heal internally. It is important to avoid demanding exercise for six weeks after your operation to make sure that the wound does not break open or stretch. This is extremely important for wounds on the legs, arms, upper back and chest. You or your Practice Nurse may wish to apply steri-strips or micropore tape for four weeks to support the wound. It is important to keep your scar out of the sun. Please make sure that you apply a factor SPF 30 or above in addition to protective shade and clothing.

## When will I have the results of the operation?

We usually have the results back to the department up to four to five weeks after your operation. You may have a follow-up appointment when we will tell you your results or we may write to you. If your operation was for skin cancer and the results show that all of the area was not completely removed, you may be asked to come back to the hospital for a further operation to take away the remains of the skin cancer.

## Who do I contact if I have concerns following my procedure?

If you are worried and would like further advice, please do not hesitate to contact us. A doctor is available to deal with your concerns 24 hours a day.

**During normal working hours**, Monday to Friday 8 am until 5 pm please telephone the Maxillofacial clinic where your procedure was carried out:

**Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton – 01273 696955 Ext. 64067**  
**Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath – 01444 441881 Ext. 68308**  
**Maxillo facial secretaries for general queries – Ext. 63695, Ext. 64756**

**For advice during evenings, weekends and on public holidays**, our partner organisation, Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead has a doctor available to assist with any concerns.

**Queen Victoria Hospital - 01342 414000 Ext. 6635**

Evening hours – Monday to Friday 5 pm until 8 am

Weekend hours – Friday, 5 pm to Monday, 8 am

Public holidays – 24 hours cover.

**Please ensure you have your patient reference number to hand when you contact us.**

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This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath

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### Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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