



WHAT IS A SURGICAL WOUND?

A surgical wound is the incision or cut made by the surgeon during an operation.

At the end of the operation most cuts are stitched or stapled.

While you are in hospital your nurse will help you to take care of your wound.

CARING FOR YOUR WOUND

Your surgeon or nurse will provide you with specific information about caring for your wound however there are some basic things to know when taking care of a surgical wound.

- Keep the wound clean and dry.
- Change the dressing as instructed by the nurse or your surgeon.
- Wash your hands before and after touching the dressing or wound.
- Avoid trauma, pressure or friction to the wound.
- Stopping smoking will help your wound heal better and faster.
- Recognise the signs and symptoms of infection.
- Do not put anything on your wound like ointments or creams unless these have been prescribed or suggested by your surgeon.

REMOVING STITCHES OR STAPLES

You will be given advice from your surgeon or the nurse on when your stitches or staples will need to be removed. This is different for each doctor. Your nurse will advise you when you are discharged.

You may have absorbable sutures – these do not need to be removed. Your nurse will tell you.

DRESSINGS

If after leaving the hospital your wound bleeds or you have a dressing that is no longer sealed, change the dressing as instructed if you have been advised to do so otherwise seek advice from your surgeon or GP.

BLEEDING

If your wound bleeds, press firmly and continuously with a clean cloth for 10-20 minutes.

If the bleeding is excessive or you cannot stop it – seek advice from your surgeon or GP. Keep pressure on the wound.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Do not use soap or shower gel directly on your healing wound.
- Showering is better than having a bath – your wound should not be soaked in water. A light splash with water is ok.
- DO NOT leave a wet dressing on your wound unless it is still sealed.
- Use clean towels on the wound and pat dry gently.
- Maintain a good standard of personal hygiene—wash daily and ensure you have clean bed linen.

ACTIVITY

Do not undertake strenuous activity while your wound is healing – follow the advice of your surgeon.

FOLLOW-UP

You will receive a follow-up phone call from a Chelsea nurse following your discharge to check on your progress and provide advice if required.

INFECTION

Infection can be a serious complication of surgery. It is important to recognise the signs and symptoms. Infection may delay healing and lead to the need for further treatment.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Increased pain
- Swelling in wound area
- Increased redness or warmth of the skin around the wound
- Discharge from the wound that is yellow, green or brown
- You may feel generally unwell or have a temperature (fever)

If you notice any of the above signs and symptoms – please contact your surgeon for advice, or your GP if your surgeon is unavailable. Your surgeon may require a swab to be taken prior to commencing antibiotics

If you are diagnosed with a wound infection following your surgery please notify the infection control nurse at Chelsea Hospital or ask your healthcare provider.