

Caring for my Caesarean Section Wound after Delivery

A guide for patients, birthing partners and relatives

Foreword

This booklet is intended for patients who have already undergone a caesarean section, the information provided is applicable for after your surgery.

If you are looking for information regarding what to do before your surgery please visit our website and look under 'patient leaflets' and you will find all of the pre-operative information.

What is a Caesarean Section?

A caesarean section, or C-section, is an operation to deliver your baby through an incision made in your stomach and womb, usually positioned just below your bikini line. This is usually around 15-20cm in length.

Around one in four pregnancies result in a caesarean section birth.

Why do people have Caesarean Sections?

Women have C-sections for many reasons, either by choice or for complications during vaginal delivery. For whatever reason, your recovery should be the same.

How long until I recover?

Generally, it takes around six weeks to recover from a c-section however this will depend upon your individual situation, if your surgery had complications, or if you have other young children at home meaning you are resting less, you may feel you need more time.

Gentle exercise such as walking will help recovery but avoid anything strenuous and ask for help when lifting heavy things. This includes, lifting prams and car seats.

Looking after your C-section wound

Your midwife will visit you at home **5 days after your delivery** where baby checks will be completed and the dressing to your wound will be removed UNLESS you have a PICO dressing (PICO dressings are explained in detail later on in this leaflet).

Check with your midwife before you leave the hospital if you have absorbable stitches or if your stitches require removal. If your stitches require removal please make an appointment with your practice nurse for this to be completed or your community midwife will remove them for you.

Once your dressing is removed, clean and dry your wound thoroughly every day with **plain water (no soaps or oils)**, do not have a bath i.e. submerge your wound fully in water for two weeks, you may shower and allow the water to run on your wound, do not scrub or massage.

After having a shower pat dry your wound with a clean towel, separate from the one you have used to dry your body

Do not touch your wound unless it is necessary and you have thoroughly washed your hands.

It's really important that you **look out for any redness, swelling, excess bruising, weeping, smell, pus or opening of the wound**; the sutures should have dissolved by 3-4 weeks. Speak to your GP if you feel unwell, have more pain or a temperature.

Try to avoid wearing underwear where the banding has direct contact with the wound. Wearing loose fitting or high waist underwear is better.

Between 5-6 weeks your wound should have healed into a scar, this will be pink/red at first and then gradually fade. You may find that you have an altered sensation in the close proximity of the wound however this will come back eventually.

Smoking

If you smoke, you should make every attempt to give up before your surgery. Smoking significantly reduces the amount of oxygen that can be distributed to your tissues; this in turn slows down wound healing. You can receive help and support to give up smoking from your GP or practice nurse.

Diet

Your body needs energy and the right nutrients to encourage good healing. A healthy balanced diet with lots of protein will help; you don't usually need to take supplements. Ensure you are thoroughly hydrated as this will also help healing.

Weight

Unfortunately those whom have a high body mass index (BMI) are more likely to have a wound infection or experience healing problems with wounds.

Diabetes

If you have diabetes, it is important that your blood sugar is well controlled – having high blood sugar can increase the chances of having a wound infection or slowing down the healing process.

PICO Dressing

Your consultant surgeon decides if you are to have a PICO dressing, they will select this dressing if you are at risk of a wound infection due to a higher BMI or because of a long term condition such as diabetes.

A PICO dressing is a negative pressure device, which has a life of one week and then discarded.

Using a negative pressure dressing places the two sides of the wound under pressure, decreasing tension, removes any moisture, increases blood flow to the wound site and overall helps to prevent infection.

Your midwife **will remove PICO on day seven** after your delivery. **Please note: the PICO box contains removable AA batteries; please be aware of this if children are around.**

The PICO box is NOT waterproof, although the dressing itself is. If you have a shower unscrew the box from the dressing and put in a safe place; after showering reconnect and press the orange play button.

Troubleshooting with PICO

You should not have to do anything apart from unscrewing the box when you shower, however it is important that you keep an eye on the box to make sure you are receiving the negative therapy. It will be flashing green on the left hand side if it is.



If PICO is flashing for a leak: Lay yourself as flat as possible and smooth the edges of the dressing down and press the orange button again. Repeat the process until a seal is obtained and the OK light is flashing green.

If PICO's full indicator is flashing: Observe the dressing, if there is a lot of staining on your dressing it will need to be changed; let your midwife know or call us and the dressing will be changed. If there isn't a lot of staining and its flashing this, press the orange button and it should reset.

If PICO is flashing for the battery: The batteries are designed to last for 1 week, PICO should not flash for this reason unless it is day 7.

If you continue to experience problems with PICO ask your midwife or call us on the hospital switchboard and ask for the tissue viability nurse or MAU department.

Hospital switchboard: 0151 708 9988

Pain after Caesarean Section

You will feel sore for a few weeks; you may need pain relief for one week to ten days after your delivery. **Discuss with your midwife or doctor before taking any pain relief** as some strong pain killers are not safe to take whilst breastfeeding.

Mobilisation techniques for getting in and out of bed may also help with the pain. Try rolling onto your side, dropping both legs over the side of the bed and pushing yourself sideways into a sitting position. Then complete the opposite for getting into bed.

Preventing blood clots

Keeping as active as possible and keeping hydrated will help to lower your risk of blood clots, you may have injections to inject yourself every day if you are particularly at risk.

Call 111, tell your GP, health visitor or midwife straight away if you have signs of a blood clot, these are: sudden redness, swelling or pain in your legs/calf area, shortness of breath, or chest pain.

Where can I get further information about infections in hospital?

The Public Health England website www.hpa.org.uk has a section on surgical wound infections which includes the latest report. More information about surgical wound infections can be found in the guideline on the Prevention and Treatment of Surgical Site Infection published by the National Institute for health and Clinical Excellence in 2008, and can be found online at www.nice.org.uk.

If you have concerns regarding infection or infection prevention, please speak to the nurse looking after you. You can also discuss your concerns with a matron or a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 0151 702 4014.

This leaflet can be changed into different languages and formats using the tools on the website. Please note when translating information into different languages via the website, some information may need clarifying for accuracy with a member of staff. This leaflet can be formally translated on request via our Patient Experience Team, although response times to have information translated can vary. To request formal translation services or if you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk

Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust
Crown Street
Liverpool
L8 7SS

Tel: 0151 708 9988

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