

Patient information

How to Care for Your Pin Sites Following Discharge

Trauma and Orthopaedics

During your hospital stay you or a family member or carer will have been asked if you would like to care for your pin sites. If agreed then you will have been taught by nursing staff how to care and maintain the sites. Competence and confidence in pin site care is required for a safe and effective discharge. District Nurses can be asked, by your nurses, to provide the service if required.

The method used to clean and redress pin sites has proven to reduce rates of infection.

Your pin sites will have been cleaned and redressed during your hospital stay, the same method is used throughout the time your external fixator is in place. No changes should be made without consultation with a member of the Limb Reconstruction Team.

You will have been given a supply of dressings, the alcoholic wipes and Hydrex solution when you were discharged from the ward.

Pin Site Care

It is normal for a straw coloured fluid to leak from pin sites. **Pin site care is undertaken every seven to ten days. How often depends where the fixator is.**

- Pin sites on the upper leg generally require cleaning every seven days because of greater muscle bulk.
- Lower leg and upper limb pins generally require cleaning every ten days.

Remember - You must wash your hand thoroughly before pin site care.

What you need



Prepare the dressing area as you were shown in the hospital, you will need a dressing field, gauze swabs folded and cut into key-hole dressings, alcoholic wipes, Hydrex solution, scissors and bandages.

Remove all the old dressings.

Clean with Alcowipes

Clean around each individual pin site with the alcoholic wipes, taking the wipe up the wire/ pin and away from the pin site. Use a fresh wipe for each pin site.



Next, the gauze keyhole dressings which have been soaked in the Hydrex solution and squeezed out are placed around each individual pin site, the black bungs are then lowered down over the dressings to hold them in place.

Hydrex/Gauze Key Hole Dressings



Next, the bandaging technique, the pins/wires are grouped together and covered with the bandaging in a figure-of-eight fashion. The bandaging should be applied firmly.

Figure of Eight Bandaging

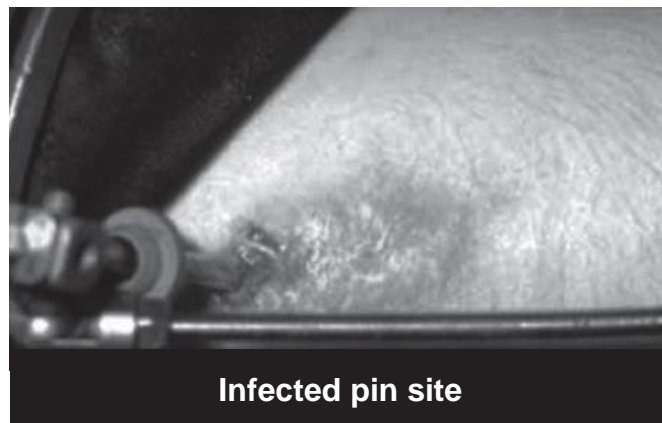
The bandaging provides not only extra cover and protection but also provides pressure which prevents your skin 'tenting' up and around the pins/wires. It reduces movement of the soft tissues around your pin sites and is more comfortable.



If

- There is visible fluid on the dressings.
- You have increased or altered pain, or increased swelling then the pin sites should be inspected for signs of infection, they should then be cleaned and redressed.

How to recognise signs of infection



If you are making adjustments to your frame pin sites can become painful and inflamed, this happens because some wires of pins are progressing through your skin and soft tissues. Pin sites which are close to joints or in the more muscular areas can become irritated through movement. This will, again, cause inflammation and pain.



Wire progression



Mechanical irritation

Should this happen then the offending pin sites should be cleaned daily until they are settled.

If the pin sites do not settle down within twenty-four to forty-eight hours or become more painful then a course of antibiotics will be required. You should contact a member of the Limb Reconstruction Team for advice/management.



Some patients are allergic to the Hydrex solution or develop redness, irritation and possibly blistering around the pin sites. If this happens then you should stop using the solution and contact a member of the Limb Reconstruction Team for advice.

Remember

Most pin site problems are due to inflammation rather than infection; however, inflamed pin sites are more susceptible to infection. It is important that any problems are readily identified and acted upon.

If you suspect that a pin site is infected, then it should be cleaned and redressed last so as not to contaminate the unaffected pin sites.

General Advice

Should you have increased or altered pain, reduction in the range of movement to the affected limb, are unable to weight-bear as you had previously or are feeling generally unwell then the cause should be identified.

- Firstly check the pin sites for signs of infection.
- If you are adjusting your fixator the stretching of your soft tissues, ligaments and nerves can cause swelling, pain and stiffness to your limb. This can usually be controlled with rest, elevation and adequate analgesia.
- Frame patients almost always have problems with swelling, this is normal. If limb swelling is associated with redness, calf pain, high temperature, chest pain, coughing up blood (haemoptysis) it is extremely important that you contact your family doctor (GP), the Limb Reconstruction team, local Emergency department (A&E) or 111 with urgency.
- The frame should be checked for signs of instability when you attend the hospital for physiotherapy or outpatient appointment.
- Showering is permitted. Between dressing changes it is advised that a plastic bag is placed over the limb to protect the pin sites. On the day the dressings are due to be changed, remove them, shower being careful not to contaminate the pin sites with the water/fluids used on your body, then shower the limb this allows the frame and the limb to be cleaned of debris. The cleaning and dressing of the pin sites should follow showering.

Follow Up

You will be given an appointment to attend the Limb Reconstruction Clinic. An appointment will have been arranged by your physiotherapist.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Remember we are here to support and help you throughout the limb reconstruction process. If you have a problem or need advice then please call

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Also you may find some useful information on the below website.
www.limbrecon.com

Directgov. www.dwp.gov/directgov.uk

Disability Benefits
Tel: 0800 121 4600

Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit
Tel: 0345 608 8545

NHS 111
Tel: 111

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