

Patient information

Surgical Wound Management

Head and Neck and Dermatology Department - Aintree Hospital

Types of Wound

- Head and Neck wound.
- Split Skin Graft- Arm.
- · Punch Biopsy.
- Excision Biopsy.
- Incisional Biopsy.
- Curettage and Cautery.

Following your procedure you will have a surgical wound. Following the general wound care advice given below will ensure the success of the treatment and is essential to encourage healing.

Types of Surgical Wound Closures

Most surgical wounds have stitches (dissolving or non-dissolving), metal clips (staples), steri-strips or glue.

Your wounds may have a mixture of all of the above depending on what your doctor thinks will be most appropriate.

Where the wound is will also determine how long stitches are in for.

In some cases the wound is left open to heal on its own; it may have a dressing over it or stitched onto the area to keep it clean and moist in case a further procedure is necessary once the doctor has seen the results of your biopsy.

The doctor will explain this to you either before or at the time of surgery.

You may be given a small tube of cream to apply to your wound to help prevent infection.

The cream will have 'eye ointment' written on it. This is not a mistake; apply to your surgical wound as instructed by your surgeon or nurse.

Stitches

- Dissolving stitches usually disappear in ten to fourteen days.
- Non dissolving stitches are removed depending on where they are and the clinician's instructions.
- Facial Wounds five days.
- Scalp Wounds seven to ten days.
- Arm / Hand Wounds seven to ten days.
- Lower limb / Joint wounds ten to fourteen days.
- Abdominal Surgical Wounds seven to ten days.
- Metallic Clips or Staples are usually removed seven to ten days.
- Steri-strips are removed with warm water in five to seven days.
- Glue does not require any form of removal post op.

Depending on the type of surgery the doctor or nurse will advise you on discharge when the clips or stitches are to be removed.

Observe the wound closely after removal of sutures or clips for wound breakdown or infections.

If you see nylon threads poking out of a healing scar, please do not pull on the stitches.

Wait for the stitches to dissolve or to be removed. However, if you're experiencing any pain around the stitches contact your G.P or the Clinic / ward for advice.

Signs of Infection

- Redness / Swelling.
- Heat around the wound.
- Pain.
- Discharge from the wound i.e. serous fluid, blood, puss (green colour).
- Unpleasant smell.

If you notice any of the above signs or symptoms contact your G.P, District nurse, local walk in centre or ring the clinic / ward for advice.

If you think it needs urgent medical review attend you're nearest walk in centre / Accident and Emergency Department.

Risk Factors Affecting the Wound Healing Process

Research shows that some people are at higher risk of developing wound infections than others due to:

- Smoking.
- Diabetes.
- Having a condition or treatment that affects their immune system such as leukaemia, chemotherapy or other immune suppressing drugs.
- Poor dietary intake.

Doctors and nurses will do everything to prevent your wound from becoming infected while you are an in the hospital.

On discharge, you must take responsibility for looking after your wound and ensure that you know how and who to tell if you are developing an infection.

If your wound bleeds press on the wound firmly with a clean cloth without looking at it for approximately 15 minutes. If it is still bleeding after this time, seek medical attention.

Problems with Wound Healing

The majority of the wounds heal without any problems.

The time frame for wound healing varies from patient to patient. However, the most common complications following surgery are wound infections and wound breakdown.

This can usually be treated by a course of antibiotic and / or dressing the wound regularly with different types of dressings.

In some cases attendance at the Nurse Led Dressing Clinic or re-admission to hospital for further surgery may be needed.

Bathing and Showering

You're normally advised to wait for 24 hours before showering or bathing after sutures / clips removed.

- Showering is preferable to bathing.
- Only take a bath if you are sure to keep the wound dry. Soaking the wound might soften the scar tissue and re-open the wound.
- Never leave a wet dressing on. Preferably take a shower, the day the dressing is due to be changed.
- Do not put any soap, shower gel, body lotion, talcum powder or other bathing products directly on to the healing wound.
- Pat the wound gently dry with a clean towel after bathing or showering.

- If the surgery was performed on your face and neck please do not wear makeup over the scar until fully healed.
- Wounds on the head and neck / other exposed areas should be protected by a high factor sun block for the first 12-24 months to prevent reddening / darkening of scars.

Changing the Dressing

- You will be sent home with a supply of dressings if this is applicable.
- In some cases you will be given the contact number for a treatment room local to you depending on the severity of your surgery and suture removal requirements.
- Depending on the type of wound, some people are expected to change their own dressings.

Wash your hands with soap and water.

Carefully take the dirty dressing off.

Do not touch the healing wound with your fingers.

If the wound is healing the wound can be left with no dressings. Some people
prefer to have a dressing to cover the wound for protection, especially if clothing
can rub against it.

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

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact the team at Aintree on the numbers below for help and advice

Between the hours of 8.30am and 5pm

Clinic 5 0151 529 0353

DSU Treatment Room 0151 529 0113

Ward 28 0151 529 5238

Between the hours of 5pm and 8.30am

Ward 28 0151 529 5238

Author: Aintree Head and Neck / Dermatology Department

Review date: April 2026

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

يمكن توفير جميع المعلومات المتعلقة بالمرضى الموافق عليهم من قبل ائتمان المستشفى عند الطلب بصيغ أخرى، بما في ذلك لغات أخرى وبطرق تسهل قراءتها وبالحروف الطباعية الكبيرة وبالصوت وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين وبطريقة مون والكترونيا.

所有經信托基金批准的患者資訊均可以其它格式提供,包括其它語言、 易讀閱讀軟件、大字

體、音頻、盲文、穆恩體(Moon)盲文和電子格式,敬請索取。

در صورت تمایل میتوانید کلیه اطلاعات تصویب شده توسط اتحادیه در رابطه با بیماران را به اشکال مختلف در دسترس داشته باشید، از جمله به زبانهای دیگر، به زبان ساده، چاپ درشت، صوت، خط مخصوص کوران، مون و بصورت روی خطی موجود است.

زانیاریی پیّوهندیدار به و نهخوشانه ی له لایه تراسته و پهسهند کراون، ئهگهر داوا بکریّت له فورماته کانی تردا بریتی له زمانه کانی تر، ئیزی رید (هاسان خویندنه وه)، چاپی گهوره، شریتی دهنگ، هیّلی موون و ئهایی کترونیکی ههیه.

所有经信托基金批准的患者信息均可以其它格式提供,包括其它语言、易读阅读软件、大字体、音频、盲文、穆恩体(Moon)盲文和电子格式,敬请索取。

Dhammaan warbixinta bukaanleyda ee Ururka ee la oggol yahay waxaa marka la codsado lagu heli karaa nuskhado kale, sida luqado kale, akhris fudud, far waaweyn, dhegeysi, farta braille ee dadka indhaha la', Moon iyo nidaam eletaroonig ah.