

Caesarean Section Wound Care Advice



Information Booklet



The National Maternity Hospital

Introduction

This patient information booklet aims to provide you with information on how to care for your caesarean section wound.

This leaflet is not intended to replace specific individualised advice given to you by your Midwife or Doctor.

Types of Dressings and Stitches

Before leaving the theatre after your operation, you will have a dressing applied to your wound covering your stitches.

The following is general guidance on the various types of dressings and stitches used.

Your Midwife will tell you about your dressing type and the type of stitches that were used for your wound and what to expect.



Dressings:

- **Standard wound dressings** (most common) are removed by your Midwife 18-30 hours following your operation.
- If a '**pressure dressing**' was applied on top of your standard wound dressing (e.g. if there was blood leakage through the standard wound dressing), this is usually removed within 6 hours by your Midwife or Doctor.
- Some women may have a **vacuum dressing** e.g. a PICO dressing applied. Your Midwife will explain how to manage this dressing. It will be removed after 7 days by your Public Health Nurse. This is arranged by your Midwife on discharge.

Stitches:

- Most women will have **dissolvable sutures** (stitches) on the wound itself and these do not need to be removed.
- Occasionally, the surgeon may use **sutures or clips** that need removal. These are removed by your Public Health Nurse 5 or 6 days after surgery or according to the surgeon's instructions.
- You may have tape called **steri-strips** on your wound underneath your dressing. If so they will usually fall off in about a week. If they are still there after 10 days, you can remove them yourself by gently peeling them off after your shower.



Caring for your wound - DO

- ✓ Do wear **loose clothing** and **big cotton underwear** making sure the waistline is above your wound.
- ✓ Do take **showers** rather than baths (1-2 per day). Allow the water to run over your wound – do not scrub or massage the wound. You may take short baths if you prefer, once your wound has started to heal, usually after 2 weeks. If your tummy is hanging over your wound site, make sure to lift up your tummy and clean under the overhang using a mild fragrance free soap. Pat dry thoroughly with a clean towel.
- ✓ Do avoid using perfumed or coloured products on the wound area.
- ✓ Do **gently pat the wound dry** after showering, using a clean towel that is separate from the one you use to dry the rest of your body.
- ✓ Do try to find time at various points throughout the day to **lie down**, loosen your clothing and allow air at the wound. If your tummy covers the wound and if you are able to, try to lift your tummy up to allow air to the wound area.
- ✓ Do place a pillow across your chest and wound whilst you cough to avoid placing pressure on the wound.
- ✓ Do use positions such as side-lying or football hold if breastfeeding to avoid putting pressure on the wound.
- ✓ Do **observe the wound** daily either by using a mirror or asking your partner to look.
- ✓ Do **report signs** and symptoms of infection or haematoma (bruising) – see page 5 for more information

Caring for your wound - **DO NOT**

- ❌ **Do not apply antiseptic creams** or lotions to your wound.
- ❌ **Do not touch** your wound unnecessarily and make sure your hands are washed correctly if you have to touch it.
- ❌ **Do not place a dressing** on your wound, unless advised by your Nurse, Midwife or Doctor.
- ❌ **Do not drive** following your caesarean section for 6 weeks or advised by your GP/Dr. (Check your cover with your insurance company)
- ❌ **Do not lift** anything heavier than your baby (including any older children) for 6 weeks
- ❌ **Do not perform household tasks** that involve a lot of activity, stretching and bending e.g. hoovering, lifting a heavy basket of washing for a few weeks. Slowly increase how much you do.



Signs of wound infection - what to look out for:

- Increasing redness, heat or swelling around the wound
- Increasing wound pain (especially at rest), usually after the initial pain has settled.
- An unpleasant smell coming from the wound.
- Your wound starting to leak yellow or green discharge or pus or your wound is gaping or opening.
- You start feeling unwell, feverish or have a high temperature.



Other signs of infection:

- Heavy vaginal bleeding, abdominal pain, chills and fever.

Signs of wound haematoma – what to look out for:

- Increasing wound pain/tenderness (especially at rest), usually after the initial pain has settled.
- Large new bruise (lump/ bulge/firm raised area)/swelling near the wound.
- Bleeding from the wound.

What should I do if I am worried about my wound?

You can contact the postnatal ward where you were cared for if you are unsure or concerned about anything or have any questions.



Holles Wing: 01637 3103, **Fitzwilliam Wing:** 01 637 3303,
Merrion Wing: 01 637 3450.

You can also attend your GP or The NMH Emergency Room which is open 24/7, if you are concerned.

Sepsis

Most wound infections are treatable but any wound infection can progress to sepsis. Sepsis is a life threatening complication of an infection.

Most cases lead to a full recovery if it's identified and treated quickly. But without quick treatment, sepsis can lead to multiple organ failure and death

Signs of Sepsis:

- a high temperature (38 degrees Celsius or above)
- low body temperature (below 36 degrees Celsius)
- Chills and shivering
- A fast heartbeat
- Problems with or changes to your breathing
- Feeling or acting differently from normal (confusion, disorientation, slurred speech)
- Vomiting
- A headache
- Feeling unwell
- If you are very unwell or have the signs of sepsis you should attend your GP immediately or in an emergency, you should attend The NMH Emergency Room or the nearest Emergency Department.



What to expect at home



At first, your caesarean section wound will be raised slightly and pinker than the rest of your skin. It will likely appear somewhat puffy.

It may take up to 6 weeks for your wound to totally heal.

Any pain should decrease after 2 or 3 days, but your wound will remain tender for up to 3 weeks or more. Some bruising around the wound is common. Numbness or itching around the wound is common too. This can sometimes last a long time.

Over time, your scar will become thinner and flatter and will turn either white or the colour of your skin.

Your GP or Consultant will check your wound at your check-up at 6 weeks.

More information

Please scan the QR code for The NMH Planned Caesarean Section Birth - Information Guide for Women and Birth Partners



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