

Helping care for your wound – Information for Patients Information Leaflet

The Liverpool Women's Foundation Trust is committed to giving the best care for all patients. We hope you have a trouble free journey after your surgery.

Your wound will have a dressing on; this will have been put on in Theatre. Any professional healthcare worker wishing to see your wound or remove stitches/clips will wash their hands before and after changing your dressing. They will also wear sterile gloves during the procedure to help prevent wound infection.

Whilst the procedure is taking place you should not be tempted to touch the area exposed. This could introduce 'germs' to the wound which may lead to an infection.

There are lots of germs on our skin and in the environment around us. Most of them are harmless, some are beneficial and a very small proportion can cause harm. Our skin protects us from germs that cause harm.

If you feel the need to cough or sneeze when the dressing is being removed or changed then please turn your head away from the exposed wound, use a tissue and wash your hands as soon as you can.

You should not remove the dressing unless instructed by a health care worker, should the dressing start coming off please inform a member of the health care team.

Steps you can take prior to surgery to help prevent infection

Showering

You are advised to have a shower or bath using soap, either the day before or on the day of surgery. Showering or bathing helps reduce the number of germs on the skin.

Hair removal

Hair at the site of the operation should not be removed with a razor, or by waxing in the week before surgery as this can increase the risk of infection by damaging the skin surface. If it is necessary to remove hair this will be done safely at the time of surgery.

Keeping warm

Staying warm before surgery will lower the risk of complications including infection. Bring additional clothing, such as a vest, dressing gown and slippers, to help keep comfortably warm before and after surgery. Tell staff if you feel cold at any time during your hospital stay.

When do surgical wound infections develop?

A surgical wound infection occurs when germs from the skin or the environment enter the incision (cut) that the surgeon makes through your skin in order to carry out the operation.

A surgical wound infection can develop at any time from two or three days after surgery until the wound has healed (usually two to three weeks after the operation).

How will I know if I have a surgical wound infection?

You may develop one or more of the symptoms listed below:

- The skin around the wound gets red or sore, or it feels hot and swollen
- Your wound has a green or yellow coloured discharge (pus)
- You feel genuinely unwell or feverish, or you have a temperature

If you have questions about the risk of infection associated with your surgery/procedure please ask the nurse/midwife or doctor caring for you. They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you have.

What happens if I develop symptoms?

If the nurse/midwife or doctor suspects that you have a surgical wound infection, they may take a wound swab which is sent to the laboratory for tests. Your nurse or doctor may prescribe treatment with antibiotics.

Following discharge

If you think you may have an infection after you have been discharged. You should tell your visiting professional health care worker. If your health care worker is not due to visit in less than 24 hours or has stopped visiting, ring your GP.

Where can I get further information about infections in hospital?

The HPA 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 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 & Control Team on 0151 702 4014.

Trust Information leaflets are available on the following topics:

General patient Information (IPC01)
Hand Hygiene (IPC02)
Hand Hygiene- NICU, Guidance for Parents and Visitors (IPC03)

Health Protection Agency Leaflets

MRSA
Clostridium Difficile
Noro virus

Please note that Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust is a smoke free site. Smoking is not allowed inside the hospital building or within the hospital grounds, car parks and gardens. Staff are available to give advice about stopping smoking, please ask about this.

This leaflet can be made available in difference formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk

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