

Wound Care after Caesarean Section

This leaflet will provide some basic information about caring for your wound after a Caesarean Section. If you have any questions about any topics on this leaflet, or want to know more information please contact your midwife/doctor.

Caesarean section

You have undergone a Caesarean section either as an elective (planned) or emergency case. A Caesarean section is a surgical procedure which involves an incision made in your lower abdomen or 'bikini-line' through which your baby has been delivered.

The Wound

The operation required a surgical incision to gain access to your uterus. The wound is on the bikini line which provides both good wound healing and favourable cosmetic appearance. The wound is between 10-15 cm long and is usually repaired using absorbable stitches (your body will absorb the stitches and there is no need to plan removal). The stitches last for 5-7 days by which time the two edges of skin should have begun to heal together. If non-dissolvable stitches or staples have been used we will inform you of an appropriate plan of care.

Wound Pain

As with any cut (surgical or traumatic) into the skin, it is likely to be painful. Once the operation drugs have worn off, you will feel the pain. The pain is usually controlled by simple pain killers such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen. However, stronger analgesia is available if required.

General Advice

It is advised that you wear loose, comfortable clothing and cotton underwear over the wound to try and limit the amount of discomfort you are in and provide a suitable environment for the wound to heal.

The dressing placed over the wound at the end of your operation will be removed 48 hours later. The dressing is waterproof so you are able to shower as usual. We recommend the use of plain water for bathing. At this point it is important for you to keep the wound as clean and dry as possible. Daily gentle cleaning and drying will reduce the amount of time taken for the wound to heal and will also reduce the risk of an infection in the wound.

Infected wound

Your wound needs to be closely monitored, as infection can lead to overwhelming sepsis within the bloodstream or break down of the normal wound healing process leading to the wound opening (wound dehiscence).

The main signs of infection are:

- Fever or feeling generally unwell
- Increasing pain in or around the wound
- Wound becomes red and warm
- A pus like discharge from the wound
- The wound has begun to separate, or has completely opened up

If you have any of these signs you must contact your GP/Midwife urgently. If you cannot gain urgent access to your GP or midwife telephone a midwife on Pannal Ward. They may advise you to attend the Accident and Emergency department if appropriate. If a wound infection is suspected you will be required to start a course of antibiotics. During this time your midwife or doctor may review the wound on several occasions.

Lifestyle, Exercise and Driving

Minimal lifting is recommended for 6 weeks, heavy lifting should be avoided for 2-3 months. Gentle exercises are safe to start after 8-10 weeks depending on the degree of post-operative pain. High impact exercise is not recommended until after 12 weeks. If activities are resumed too early it can increase the risk of wounds re-opening.

Sexual intercourse can be resumed when you are comfortable to do so. Please be aware that your usual contraception may not work effectively during the first 6 weeks after the birth of your child. For further information please ask your Midwife/GP.

Driving may be resumed once you are able to turn without restriction to look over your shoulder, able to operate the gearstick and wear a seatbelt appropriately without discomfort and safe to perform an emergency stop. You may wish to check with your insurance company to confirm.

This leaflet has been produced for use for Harrogate District Hospital patients and is in accordance with current NICE guidelines for:

Harrogate District Hospital; Lancaster Road; HG2 7SX; 01423 885959

Useful Contact numbers: Pannal ward: 01423 553157; Community Midwife (office): 01423 553051, or the number identified on your postnatal notes

If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as Braille, audiotape or large print), please ask the staff who are looking after you.