

# Going home after your child's heart surgery

Ward 30

Produced: May 2019

Review: May 2022

Information for Patients

Leaflet number: 406 Version: 2

## Introduction

This leaflet aims to tell you about what you should expect and what you should do when you go home after your child's surgery.

## Wound care

Once at home your child will be able to have a shallow bath. However your child's dressing and stitches must not get wet. You will need to change your child's wound dressing(s) once you are at home, after a bath may be the ideal time to do this. Depending on the age and co-operation of your child you may need help with this. Please follow the step by step guide.

## Infection

Wound infections can happen for many reasons. They are more common soon after surgery, but can happen a few weeks later at home. Signs of infection to look out for on or around wound sites include:

- Redness
- Worsening pain
- Swelling
- Leaking fluid

If any of these signs happen within your child's first week at home please phone ward 30 on **0116 256 3961**.

If your child has these signs after their first check-up please take your child to the GP or call 111 for advice.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## Step-by-step guide to changing your child's dressing(s)

1. Make sure you have all the correct equipment. You will need:
  - Clean dressing(s)
  - Cooled boiled water
  - Gauze/disposable cloths/cotton wool
  - Clean towel
  - Bin
2. Explain to your child what you are about to do and take their top off so you can get to the wound easily
3. Remove the old dressing and put it in the bin
4. Wash your hands
5. Using damp gauze clean around the wound sites gently, so as not to cause pain to your child. Start at the top of the wound and work your way down.
6. Throw away dirty gauze after each use
7. Using a fresh piece of damp gauze, very gently, starting at the top of the wound, wipe down your child's wound
8. Pat the area dry
9. Put a clean dressing on, cut using clean scissors if needed
10. Repeat this process every 48 hours (2 days) until you come back to the hospital for your child's check-up in 1 week.

## Follow up appointment

Your child will have a check-up with the hospital 7 to 10 days after discharge. This will be in the outpatient department at East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre in Glenfield Hospital (next to ward 30). At this appointment you can ask any questions that you may have. Your child's heart rate, saturations, blood pressure and weight will be taken. The nurse will remove the dressing and any remaining stitches from your child's wound.

When stitches are removed your child may feel a slight pulling of the skin which may be uncomfortable, but it should not be painful. Clothes may catch on the wound after the dressing has been taken off; this may feel uncomfortable but is normal as any scabs come loose. Please encourage them not to scratch or touch their wound as this could lead to an infection. Your child will then have an ECHO (scan of their heart) and be seen by a doctor. If all is well, you can then go home.

## Post-op (after surgery) review

An appointment will arrive in the post a couple of weeks later for your child to be seen in the East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre again 4-8 weeks after leaving the hospital. At this appointment the doctor will talk with you about the plans for the future and when your child will need to be seen again.

## Medication

The medication that you have been given has been supplied by the hospital pharmacy. If your child needs to continue on this medication, your GP will get a discharge letter from the hospital. Your GP can give you a repeat prescription so that you can get the medication from your local pharmacy. Some of the drugs are unusual for young children, and you may find that your local pharmacy has to order them in especially for your child. For this reason you should hand in the prescription to your pharmacy in plenty of time so you do not run out of medication. Please double check the correct amount of medication has been written on the label as medication can come in different strengths, so you may be giving more or less medication than before, but ensure that it is the correct dosage in milligrams (mg).

Your GP should also prescribe syringes for you because over time and after washing the numbers can come. If they are reluctant to prescribe syringes please let them know that **this is important to make sure the liquids are given in exactly the right measurements.**

If you have any problems with this please contact the cardiac liaison nurses who will write to your GP. Some over the counter medications are not suitable for patients with cardiac conditions. For this reason, when buying over the counter medication, please tell your pharmacist that your child has a heart condition and what medication they are currently taking.

Pain should not be a long term problem for your child. If your child is in pain for longer than a week after discharge please consult your GP. Do not continue to give paracetamol/ibuprofen for longer than a week without discussing it with your GP.

## Home care

We advise that your child does not attend nursery/school/college until they have been seen by their consultant in the East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre, which should be between 4 and 8 weeks after discharge. This is because the wound and chest bones need time to heal (usually 6-8 weeks after surgery) and your child will need time to recover from the operation and return to normal activities gradually. The chest bones have been broken so we advise that babies and young children **are not picked up under the arms** during this time.

**Your child should not take part in contact sports and rough play. This including:**

- Rugby
- Netball
- Hockey
- Cycling
- Roller skating
- Playgrounds/ Fun fair/ amusement parks

We understand that this may be difficult for some children to understand, but you need to encourage them to be careful. Although children will stop if they get any pain their brothers and sisters may not. Please talk to other children and remind them to be careful around the child who has had surgery.

## Immunisations

If your child becomes unwell this could make their recovery more difficult. We recommend your child does not have any immunisations for a at least 4 weeks after surgery and you try to keep away from other people who are unwell. This includes people with coughs and colds.

## Dental care

It is very important to teach your child good dental hygiene at a very early age because bleeding gums are a gateway for germs to enter the bloodstream. Germs that enter the bloodstream can cause a severe infection such as, bacterial endocarditis, in and around the heart. Good dental hygiene includes cleaning teeth morning and night, as well as after eating sweet treats; and regular visits to the dentist. Washing hands well and regularly is also very important.

## Getting help and advice when you are at home

You cannot bring your child back to ward 30 unannounced. The ward may not have any beds available which means we would have to transfer you to another hospital. This may delay your child receiving treatment.

If you are concerned about your child's health in any way after your child's procedure your first point of contact is your GP, unless it is an emergency, in which case ring 999 for an ambulance or take your child to the nearest A&E department. You can also call 111 for advice.

### When should you call your GP?

- When your child is off their food/milk and there is no obvious reason for this
- Your child is unusually lethargic (tired, sleeping more than usual)
- They are more sweaty than usual
- They become pale or blue
- They are breathless

Please note that these reasons to see your GP are in relation to your child's heart (cardiac) care. If you are concerned about your child's health in any other way, always consult your GP.

If your child is under 5 years old, your health visitor may be able to help with health related issues.

### Cardiac Liaison Nurses

You will have met the cardiac liaison nurses during your stay in hospital. Please do phone them if you have any questions or queries relating to your child. The ward nurses will also aim to answer queries from you, however they may be busy with children on the ward and it may be difficult to give advice as they cannot see your child.

## Contact details

Cardiac Liaison Nurses: 0116 258 3338

Ward 30: 0116 256 3961

East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre: 0116 250 2881 (For outpatient appointment queries only)

Switchboard: 0300 303 1573

**Medical Information**

Medication	Dose in mg	Dose in mls	Concentration	How many doses? What time?	Special instructions

**Consultant Cardiologist:** .....

**Consultant Surgeon:** .....

**Diagnosis:** .....

**Surgical Procedure:** .....

**Date of procedure:** .....

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો  
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)