

Caring for your wound (Burns & Plastics Dressing Clinic)

Department of Plastic Surgery

Information for Patients

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Introduction

You have been referred to the Burns & Plastics Dressing Clinic (BPDC) because you have a wound. This may be from a burn or traumatic injury, or after plastic surgery. This leaflet, together with the advice from your nurse, will tell you how to care for your wound at home.

What happens after my appointment?

- You will be discharged as no further input is needed from BPDC - but you may still need an outpatient appointment (details of which will be sent to you via post).
- You will be discharged to your GP, District Nurse or Practice Nurse.
- You will need to attend the Burns & Plastics Dressing Clinic (BPDC) again for a face-to-face follow-up appointment. Details will be given to you before you leave.
- You will have a virtual follow-up appointment with BPDC for a review. The virtual video clinic is an appointment system only and is done via an online video call (AccuRx) with you. Please ensure you are ready at your allotted time (see blue appointment card attached). You will receive a text message the day before your appointment with a link to upload photographs of your wound and a separate link for your online video appointment.

If you have any concerns about your wound whilst you are waiting for a follow-up appointment, please contact us on 0116 258 5328 and we will arrange an online video call at the earliest time.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit 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

Wound dressings

A wound dressing is a sterile pad or compress applied to a wound to promote healing and protect the wound from further harm. You may need different layers of dressing depending on your wound. The purpose of a dressing is to:

- absorb any leakage from the wound.
- reduce the risk of infection.
- provide ideal conditions for healing.
- protect the area until the wound is healed.
- prevent stitches (if you have any) from catching on clothing.

Changing the dressing on your wound

The original dressing can be left in place until advised by the nurse. We will tell you in clinic how often to change your dressing.

If the dressing gets wet from blood or any other liquid, it must be changed to reduce the risk of infection. A small amount of staining on your dressing is acceptable.

You will be given an amount of dressings, however after a period of time we may ask you to source more dressings through your GP/ practice nurse or district nurse.

Preparing to change the dressing:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially your palms and between your fingers.
- Dry hands with a clean towel/ kitchen roll.
- Gather what you will need - new dressing, clean pair of scissors (if needed for cutting the dressing to size).
- Clean the table/ surface that you are going to place the new dressing on thoroughly.
- Prepare your dressings by opening them up and make sure that the dressing is kept within the packet.
- Wash your hands again.

How to remove the old dressing:

- Carefully take off the dirty dressing without touching the side that has been in contact with your wound.
- If the dressing is stuck, soak with some water and wait for the dressing to loosen. Allow a bit of time for it to loosen. Sometimes dried blood may stick to the dressing and need a gentle 'pull'; it is not unusual when this happens to see a small amount of blood. Don't panic - apply gentle pressure and this should stop.
- Place the dirty dressing in a waste bag and wash your hands again.

How to clean your wound and apply a new dressing:

- If you have clean gloves put them on.
- Wash your wound using tap water and make sure the wound and surrounding skin are cleaned (or you can do this in the shower).
- You may want to time your bath/ shower for when you need a dressing change. If your dressing gets wet, it must be changed.

Please note: showering is better than having a bath. Soaking the wound might soften the scar tissue, increase the risk of infection and re-open the wound. Make sure the water is not too hot and the force of the shower is not too fast.

- Do not put any soap, shower gel, body lotion, talcum powder or other bathing products directly on the wound, unless you have been told otherwise by your nurse.
- Use a separate towel to pat the area dry. Make sure the wound and surrounding skin are fully dry before applying the new dressing.
- Put the new dressing on your wound, following instructions that came with the dressing and the advice given by your nurse. Take care not to touch the inside of the new dressing so that it stays clean.

Your dressing regime:

1. Contact layer (to be placed directly on the wound):

2. Secondary dressing (to be placed on top of the contact layer):

3. Bandages/ tapes/ stockings (to be used to hold the dressing in place if needed):

Aftercare advice

- If you had surgery or a burn on your face, do not wear make-up over the scar until it has fully healed.
- Avoid swimming until your wound has healed and stitches have dissolved or been removed.
- Wounds can become itchy which is normal; do not scratch as it may delay healing. To help reduce itching moisturise the surrounding skin and try to keep yourself cool as over heating can cause more itching. Take an antihistamine if you can and mention this to your nurse.

- Once your wound has healed, apply a non-perfumed moisturiser 2 to 3 times a day, and make sure when exposed to the sun you wear a factor 50 sunscreen or keep the area covered. Scar tissue can burn more easily and darken if exposed to strong sunlight.
- Ask your nurse about specific scar management.

Managing swelling:

It can be normal for the area surrounding the wound to swell.

If your wound is on a limb, keep it raised (elevated) to help with swelling. If your wound is on your leg or foot, raise your ankle so it is at a greater height from the ground than your hip. If your wound is on your hand or arm try using a sling, or rest your arm on some pillows to elevate your arm above the level of your heart.

Managing pain:

Some pain is normal, especially within the first week of an injury, burn or operation.

Take the prescribed pain relief regularly rather than waiting until you feel pain, as your pain will be better controlled if you take them regularly within the stated dose.

As you feel the pain reduce you can gradually reduce the amount of pain relief medication you are taking, and take it less frequently.

Some painkillers can interact with certain medication which you may regularly take, therefore please talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about what you are able to take.

If your pain dramatically increases or is not responding to pain relief, please seek medical advice. If you have increased pain with no obvious explanation it could be a sign of developing an infection (if you have a wound on your hand and you have not kept it elevated all day, it would be normal for more pain to be felt in the evening).

Stitches

You may have had stitches to close your wound. These are also known as sutures. Some types of stitches have to be taken out, but others will dissolve which can take several weeks to fully dissolve.

If you are told you need to have stitches removed, please follow the instructions you were given before referral to this clinic.

Looking out for signs of an infection

Most wounds heal without any problems. However, a common complication with any wound is infection. It is important that you know how to tell if you are developing an infection after you go home. If a wound becomes infected, it may:

- become more painful.
- look red or swollen.
- have more leakage than usual, like liquid, pus or blood (some oozing from the wound is normal and blood or a pale yellow fluid may stain your dressing).
- have an unpleasant smell.
- cause you to develop a temperature, feel feverish or generally unwell.

If you notice any of the above symptoms or have any concerns about your wound, contact your GP or the Burns & Plastics Dressing Clinic straight away. For advice out of normal GP working hours, contact the NHS helpline on 111 who will direct you to the most appropriate service.

Contact details

Burns & Plastics Dressing Clinic can be contacted on Tel: 0116 258 5328 (we aim to be available for advice over the phone Monday to Friday, between the hours of 8am and 3pm).

Other useful contacts:

- District Nurses: 0300 300 7777
- Your GP practice
- Out of normal working hours: NHS helpline 111
- Medical emergency call 999

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

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