

## CARE OF YOUR STITCHED WOUND AFTER YOUR OPERATION

### **Relief of pain**

The local anaesthetic that you have had will wear off over the next 1 to 2 hours. You may need to take simple pain relief, e.g. Paracetamol as directed on the manufacturer's packet to cover the next 12 to 24 hours. Aspirin should be avoided as it increases your risk of post-operative bleeding. Check with your GP if you have been prescribed other analgesia.

### **Bleeding**

The operation site will be checked for bleeding before you leave the health centre. If bleeding occurs at home, do not disturb the dressing. Apply a pad to the area. Do not lift the pad from the wound for a full 10 minutes.

If possible, elevate or raise the area, e.g. arm or leg. If bleeding persists, you will need to visit your practice nurse or local Emergency Department for assessment. A clean dressing will be provided once bleeding has settled if this is necessary.

Be vigilant for bleeding if you take anticoagulants, e.g. aspirin or Warfarin.

Remember to take your practice nurse letter with you when you see the practice nurse.

### **Stitches**

Stitches or sutures will normally be removed at your own surgery by the practice nurse (5 to 14 days – your practice nurse letter has these details). You will need to book an appointment with the practice nurse well in advance of needing stitches removed or dressings renewed (details of the dates are supplied in your practice nurse letter). If you are concerned about discomfort when the stitch is removed, consider taking simple pain relief, e.g. Paracetamol, an hour before your appointment. STERIS strips (sticky strips) may be applied over the wound following suture removal to help support the wound. Remember once your stitches have been removed the wound may appear healed but it will not be strong. It can take several months for skin to regain its strength and flexibility. Treat the area with care.

A greasy ointment, e.g. Vaseline, can be applied after removal of the dressing to prevent crusting.

### **Sport or activity**

On the first day, you should rest if possible. Remember you have had a small operation and going shopping does not count as rest! Sport is best avoided for the next 7 days and up to 2 weeks if your skin sample has come from a place located over 'active' muscles, especially the legs or shoulders. Stretched stitches may mean a bumpy scar or a stitch that will not hold. Sometimes wounds on the chest and upper back become lumpy. This is called keloid scarring and is unavoidable.

### **Bathing**

Bathing should be avoided for the first 3 days. Ideally, the wound should be covered until the stitch comes out. If bathing, never leave a wet dressing in place. Wash your hands and change it for a clean dressing (supplied as necessary). A wet dressing increases your risk of infection.

### **The pathology result**

This is normally available 2 weeks after the sample has been taken. The dermatology doctor will write to your GP explaining the result and any further treatment or action needed. We will send you a copy of the letter. If you have not had your results after four weeks please contact your surgery.

### **Complications**

The signs of infection can be any of the following:

- . increasing pain at the site
- . swelling
- . redness
- . a pus-like discharge

If you are concerned about any of the above, see your practice nurse promptly.

**Your practice nurse is the first point of contact.**

If you experience persistent pain after 48 hours, you may need advice from your GP.