Department of Dermatology, Churchill Hospital

Information for patients following closure of a wound with stitches
The local anaesthetic will usually wear off in about 1-2 hours. During this time do not exert yourself and avoid leaning forwards or doing any strenuous activity.

It is important to rest and eat a good balanced diet which will aid your general healing and well-being.

If you are in pain we recommend that you take paracetamol as instructed by the doctor or nurse.

Keep your dressing in place and dry for 2 days. After 2 days you may shower/bath as normal. Remove the wet dressing, dry the area thoroughly and re-apply a plaster if necessary.

Repeat this process until your stitches are removed.

**Frequently asked questions:**

‘Can I keep the original dressing on for more than 48 hours’?

Yes, as long as the dressing remains clean and dry.
Bleeding:

• If you start to bleed or notice blood on the dressing, do not panic! Slight oozing or spotting of blood on the dressing is normal. However, if the bleeding persists apply firm, continual pressure to the area for 20 minutes. (Usually this will stop most bleeding).

Frequently asked questions:
‘What should I do if I cannot stop the bleeding’?

Please contact the department or your GP for advice. (See contact details on the next page)

‘What should I do if I take medication such as Aspirin, Warfarin or Clopidogrel, which are blood thinners’?

You are at a slightly higher risk of bleeding, but do not stop taking your medication unless advised to do so.
General Information

Swelling and bruising
• Some swelling or bruising may occur, especially if you have had surgery around the eyes. This should improve over the week but may sometimes take longer.

Frequently asked questions:
‘My swelling is not improving.’

Please contact the department or your GP for advice if you are concerned.

Infection
• We take every precaution to prevent a wound infection before, during and after your operation. Despite this, some wounds will still become infected. Symptoms of a wound infection are: smell, discharge, swelling, redness or an increase in pain. You may also experience fever or feel generally unwell.

Frequently asked questions:
‘Who do I contact if I think I have an infection’?

Contact the department (see contact details on the next page) or your GP if you have one or more of the above symptoms, you may be prescribed an antibiotic if the wound is infected.

Smoking
• Smoking affects your healing. You are advised to stop or at least reduce your daily amount of cigarettes for the duration of your healing.

Scarring
• Every effort will be made to minimise the scar. However on the chest, shoulders, back, arms and legs, scars can spread, may become thickened and be more noticeable. You should avoid physical activities that put a strain on the stitches for the first 2-3 weeks. Straining the stitches may lead to the wound
opening and this could affect the healing of the wound and how it looks once it has healed.

- After your stitches have been removed, massage the scar gently twice a day with a moisturiser which will help improve the way it looks. Some people will develop a slight reaction to stitches under the skin which will make the scar feel lumpy. This will settle in time.

**Numbness**

- Numbness in the area of the scar can occur. Usually this will improve over time but can last up to 2 years, or in rare cases, longer.

**Removal of stitches**

- Your stitches will need to be removed in the department in………days.

- Please make an appointment with your practice nurse in ……..days.

*(Delete as necessary)*
Information for practice nurse:

*If you suspect an infection, please swab the area before prescribing an antibiotic and contact the department on 01865 228241.

Type of suture used: .................................................................

Number of sutures: .................................................................

Any additional information for practice/district nurse:
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How to contact us:

Mon - Fri between 0800 - 1700hrs on:

(01865) 228241 or 228212 or 228225 – please leave a message with your name and contact number

At other times please contact the on-call dermatologist via the Churchill hospital switchboard on 01865 741841.
If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk