

# Care of your wound after breast surgery

## Breast Unit Patient Information

### Stitches, dressings and wound care

Usually, you will have dissolvable sutures (stitches) that do not need to be removed, although they may take several weeks or months to dissolve completely. If any non-dissolving sutures are used, The Breast Team will organise for these to be removed.

The ward staff or Breast Surgeon will advise before you are discharged home, whether the dressing used is shower proof or should be kept dry.

If your dressings are shower proof, please do not soak the wound in the bath. After a shower, pat the dressing dry using a clean towel/ kitchen paper and ensure it is completely dry before putting on your clothes.

You may have a line of surgical glue on your wound instead of a dressing. This will gradually flake away and disappear. You may shower after 24 hours if the wound is glued.

It is advisable not to use any perfumed soaps or deodorant on or around the wound until it has completely healed (for about 6 weeks)

It is not uncommon for the scar area, chest wall or breast to be bruised and slightly swollen after surgery. This will gradually settle, but can take several weeks/ months. We advise that you wear a soft, supportive bra (without wires) day and night for the first 2 weeks at least.

It is important to know the signs of a wound infection to look out for after your surgery:

- Tender, swollen, warm/ hot to touch or the area is red
- Discharge from the wound
- Feeling unwell with a raised temperature

If you have any concerns do contact the **Breast Clinical Nurse Specialists on 01225 824057 (Monday to Friday 8am-5pm)** or your **GP** for advice.

A follow up appointment in the Breast Unit, will be organised for you after your surgery.

## Diet and smoking

We would encourage you to eat a healthy well balanced diet rich in protein to aid wound healing.

Smoking and passive smoking has an adverse effect on wound healing. Nicotine reduces the ability of blood to carry enough oxygen to the tissues and skin causing wound breakdown and delayed healing. If you wish to continue smoking after your operation, we recommend you refrain from doing so until at least 12 weeks after surgery, owing to the high risk of wound breakdown.

[www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking) or call the free Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044

## Scar massage

Scars take approximately 18 to 24 months to mature (i.e. become flatter, paler and softer). They are fragile and can easily be damaged if knocked. They often change colour, dependant on the temperature.

Scarred skin can become thick, lumpy and itchy, as it is often unable to produce its own oil or sweat. Massaging your scars daily once your wounds have fully healed (around 14 days after surgery) is therefore essential.

You should massage the scar line using your fingertips, in small circular movements across the scar. You can lubricate the scar using a non-perfumed moisturising cream. Try to massage the scar 3 times a day for 5 to 10 minutes each time and build this into your daily routine. Please continue until the scar is soft, pale and flat.

## Resuming daily activities

It is advisable to **avoid heavy household chores and lifting heavy objects** for a **minimum of 2 weeks** after your surgery. Please **do not drive** before having your follow up appointment with your surgeon.

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email [ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656 / 826319.