

Wound and burn care

Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet gives information about how to care for your wound or burn.

What if I have stitches?

Your stitches need to be taken out by the nurse at your GP surgery in _____ days.

Please make sure you make an appointment for this as soon as possible.

What if I have skin staples?

The care of your skin staples will be identical to stitches.

The removal of staples can only be done with the special staple removal device. We will give you this when you leave hospital. Make sure you take this with you when you go to your appointment with the nurse at your GP surgery for the removal of your staples.

What if I have Steri-Strips?

Your strips need to be taken off yourself or by the nurse at your GP surgery in _____ days.

If you take them off yourself, you need to:

- Take off the dressing so you can see the Steri-Strips.
- Soak them in water – this can be done in a bath or sink in plain water (without soap or bubble bath).
- Once the Steri-Strips are wet, the adhesive will come unstuck.
- If the Steri-Strips do not fall off by themselves, gently pull them to remove them.

What if my wound is closed with skin glue?

Sometimes special skin glue is used to close wounds. Do not try to remove the skin glue – it will come off by itself when your wound has healed after about seven to 10 days.

How do I care for my wound?

- Keep your wound clean and dry.
- Do not take your dressing off until you are told to remove it.
- Make sure your dressing is not becoming too tight or loose.

What can I take for the pain?

Take painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen, if you can take them (always read the label; do not exceed the recommended dose).

What do I need to look out for at home?

- If your wound splits open again or starts to bleed, contact your GP. If the surgery is not open, go to your nearest Emergency Department.
- Check for signs of infection. These include:

- Swelling, redness and increasing pain in the affected area.
 - Pus forming in or around the wound.
 - Feeling generally unwell.
 - A high temperature (fever) of 38C (100.4F) or above.
 - Swollen glands under your chin or in the neck, armpits or groin.
- If you get these symptoms, contact your GP or call NHS 111 for advice.
 - An infected wound can usually be successfully treated with a short course of antibiotics.

How do I care for my burn?

The dressing applied to your burn will protect the wound and help it heal. It is important that you keep your dressing clean and dry to help prevent infection. The nurse will tell you when your dressings are next due to be changed.

However, the dressing will need to be changed if it:

- Becomes wet or very dirty.
- Falls off or becomes very loose.
- Becomes smelly.

You will need to contact your GP surgery if your dressing needs to be changed.

What should I look out for at home?

You should seek advice from your GP or NHS 111 if:

- The wound becomes painful or smelly.
- You develop a high temperature of 38C (100.4F) or higher.
- The dressing becomes soaked with fluid leaking from the wound.
- The wound has not healed after two weeks.

Will I have a scar?

Scars are a natural part of the healing process. Most will fade and become paler over time, although they never completely disappear.

Make sure you protect your scar from sunlight by using a high factor sun cream (SPF of 30 or more).

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblinks:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Burns-and-scalds/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Cuts-and-grazes/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of our nurses. If you need help when you return home, please contact your GP or NHS 111.

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative language or format, for example in large print or easy read, please call us on 0800 073 0510 or email dgft.pals@nhs.uk or write to Patient Advice and Liaison Service.