

Patient information

Care following your minor procedure

General Information

After your head and neck procedure, please ensure you:

- Keep the wound and dressings dry and clean for at least 72 hours
- Avoid vigorous exercise; do not bend over for first 24 to 48 hours
- Avoid consuming alcohol for first 24 hours
- Avoid smoking/ smoky environments until your wound has healed

Will I be in any discomfort afterwards?

Start taking regular over-the-counter pain relief (e.g., Paracetamol) as required before the local anaesthetic wears off. Please read and follow instructions, warnings and dosage on the packet or bottle. If you are prescribed antibiotics, complete the course.

Some tenderness, pain, swelling, and bruising is expected after the surgery. If you notice excessive swelling, pain leakage, or, increased redness, this may indicate a wound infection. Contact the department or your GP for advice.

Elevate the head as much as possible. Sit in a recliner or use two or three pillows when sleeping. Raising the head reduces bruising and swelling.

What should I do if there is bleeding?

It's normal to have oozing of blood from the wound over the first few days.

If bleeding occurs, apply continuous firm pressure with clean, damp pad directly on the wound for 10 minutes. Repeat as necessary. If bleeding continues or is excessive, seek medical attention.

Looking after your dressings

- After initial 72 hours, bathe dressings in warm salty water twice daily and continue once dressings come away. Do not take dressings off
- Most dressings are splash proof not waterproof – keep the wound area or dressing covered when showering for the first few days.
- If dressings become wet or dirty, they can be removed and replaced. Be careful not to pull them off. Speak to the department/ your GP for advice.
- Butterfly stitches (white paper strips), if used, will come off when they are ready. If they start to curl, trim the edges, and press down firmly on to skin.

Caring for your stitches

Dissolving (resorbable) stitches do not need to be removed. If these are buried under the skin, they do not require any action. If they are on the surface of the wound, they can be washed and moisturised after the first week to help them dislodge.

If you had non-resorbable stitches placed, you may be asked to return for an outpatient's dressing appointment or attend your GP practice to see the practice nurse for the stitches to be removed.

Stitches in the head and neck area are usually removed in 5 to 7 days. On the scalp, they may be removed up to two weeks later.

If you have been prescribed with an ointment, please apply following advice as verbally instructed.

Will I have a scar?

Most injuries and any procedure performed will leave a permanent scar. This can initially look raised, red and lumpy.

Once comfortable enough to touch, regular massage to the scar with firm circular movements with an un-perfumed moisturising cream or petroleum jelly will help improve the scar appearance.

The scar can take 1 to 2 years to soften and fade. Newly healed wounds and scars are more susceptible to sunburn - take appropriate sun protection precautions.

Infection can cause a wound to reopen - this may lead to problems with scar formation (e.g. thickening or stretching).

If you have any concerns about your scar, contact your GP who may refer you back to the hospital.

People heal at different rates. Take into consideration your current medical health, diet, smoking status as these factors can affect the rate at which your wound heals.

Who should I contact if I need some more help?

Conquest Hospital:

Maxillofacial Unit - Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 773207

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Maxillofacial and Orthodontic Unit - Tel: 0300 131 4500 Ext: 771756

Out of hours:

In an emergency, go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E)

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Mr C J Surwald - Maxillofacial Consultant.

Mr M Shastri - Maxillofacial Consultant

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:

Diagnostic, Anaesthetics and Surgery

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Responsible Clinician: Julia Cousins, Hannah Williams

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