

PATIENT INFORMATION

Wound Care following a Caesarean Section

Maternity Services

This leaflet provides some information and advice on caring for your caesarean section wound at home. It will explain steps you can take to reduce your risk of developing a wound infection.

What can I expect after my caesarean section?

A caesarean is a major operation and it can take some time for you to feel back to normal. The outer skin edges of your wound should seal after around two days but the internal healing of the muscles and tissues can go on for many months. Afterwards you can expect:

- Pain – small movements such as getting out of bed, coughing and laughing may be uncomfortable. Simple painkillers can help with this.
- Vaginal discharge or bleeding – this is normal after the birth of your baby and can last up to 6 weeks.
- A surgical wound – this usually sits just below your bikini line. It will be covered by a wound dressing which can be removed on day 3 (unless you have a PICO dressing which will be covered in more detail). Please do not be afraid of looking at your wound once the dressing is removed, this way you will be able to spot any changes.
- Your surgeon will have either used dissolvable stitches or removable. Please ensure your midwife tells you which ones you have prior to discharge home.
 - Any removable stitches are usually taken out on Day 5 or Day 7 if you have a PICO dressing in place.

How can I look after my wound at home?

In the first few days when your dressing is still in place, you can still shower as normal. Just try not to soak the dressing. Once your dressing has been removed, clean your wound with plain water, pat it dry with a clean towel separate from the one you have used to dry your body.

Do not use soaps or oils on your wound and try to avoid touching your wound.

Try to wear underwear that is loose fitting or high waisted and avoid underwear where the banding has direct contact with the wound.

Do not lift anything heavier than your baby for 6 weeks and do not drive for 6 weeks. Take rest when you can and ensure you maintain a healthy diet.

Am I likely to get a wound infection?

Surveillance undertaken by the Health Protection Agency has shown approximately 1 in 10 women may develop a caesarean section wound infection. This is higher than other similar types of surgery and more research is underway to try to understand this better. However, we know that the following are risk factors for developing a wound infection:

- Being overweight
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- A poor diet without enough nutrients

What are the signs of infection?

If you have any of the following please contact your midwife or GP as soon as possible.

- More pain in or around your wound since the birth of your baby
- Your wound appears red, hot or swollen
- Your wound has green or yellow weeping or discharge
- You have a strong odour to your vaginal discharge
- You feel feverish or have a high temperature

How will I care for my PICO dressing?

Your midwife or surgeon should tell you if you have a PICO dressing in place. If you are unsure, please ask. This is the decision of your consultant. You will usually be given this dressing if you are at a higher risk for developing infection such as BMI over 35 or because of a long term condition such as diabetes.

A PICO dressing is a negative pressure device which has a life of one week and is then discarded. **Your midwife will remove this dressing along with any sutures on day 7. Please note the PICO box contains removable AA batteries; please be aware of this if children are around.**

Using a negative pressure dressing places the 2 sides of the wound under pressure, decreasing tension, removes any moisture, increases blood flow to the wound site and overall helps to prevent infection.

You can still shower as normal with a PICO dressing but the battery powered box is NOT waterproof. This can be removed by unscrewing the box from the dressing and putting it in a safe place. Following showering you can reconnect the box and press the orange play button.



How do I know what the lights mean on the PICO box?

You should not have to do anything apart from unscrewing the box when you shower, however it is important that you keep an eye on the box to make sure you are receiving the negative therapy. It will be flashing green on the left hand side if it is.

If PICO is flashing for a leak: Lay yourself as flat as possible and smooth the edges of the dressing down and press the orange button again. Repeat the process until a seal is obtained and the OK light is flashing green.

If PICO's full indicator is flashing: Observe the dressing, if there is a lot of staining on your dressing it will need to be changed; let your midwife know or call us and the dressing

will be changed. If there isn't a lot of staining and its flashing this, press the orange button and it should reset.

If PICO is flashing for the battery: The batteries are designed to last for 1 week, PICO should not flash for this reason unless it is day 7

References

National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (2021) Caesarean Section (Clinical Guideline number 192). London, NICE.

During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have questions or concerns.

MATRON

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward/department staff can contact Matron to arrange to meet with you. Out of hours, a Senior Nurse can be contacted via the ward/department to deal with any concerns you may have.

INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

NOTES

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

If you have any queries regarding Caesarean Section wound care, please contact our Maternity Triage on (01695) 656604

ANY CONDITION SPECIFIC DANGER SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

If you have any of the following please contact your midwife or GP as soon as possible.

- More pain in or around your wound since the birth of your baby
- Your wound appears red, hot or swollen
- Your wound has green or yellow weeping or discharge
- You have a strong odour to your vaginal discharge
- You feel feverish or have a high temperature

CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION

- Maternity Triage
- Your own GP

OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) – 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) – 0800 328 6297

**Please call 01704 704714 if you need
this leaflet in an alternative format**

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Please scan the QR code below to provide feedback on
your postnatal care



Author: Carly McNally/Laura Hall
Ref: 22/14
Version: 1
Reviewed: November 2022
Next Review: November 2025