

23. Wound care after surgery

The type of care that a surgical wound requires depends on the nature of the surgery so you may be given specific advice for your wound care. Wound care after surgery may require help from a nurse, family member, friend, carer or by yourself. Some people find it hard to tolerate the look or smell of a wound as it heals, though any post-operative pain can usually be treated very effectively. Although looking after a post-operative wound can be daunting it is extremely important that surgical wounds are cared for properly as they can lead to chest infections, blood clots or infection of the wound itself. The rate of wound healing can vary between patients so it is important to keep the area clean until fully healed. If in any doubt, always contact your GP or an oncology nurse.

How can I manage my wound?

- You are not alone after your surgery and you can ask at any time if you need help or assistance with treating their post-surgery wound.
- Surgery obviously increases the chances of getting an infection as it will have caused a break in the skin or mucous membranes – part of the body's natural defences. Wounds must therefore always be kept as clean as possible and antibiotics are sometimes prescribed to help prevent infection.
- **It is essential that you contact your doctor if you feel at all unwell or have a temperature of more than 38°C or both.**
- It is important that the wound is left undisturbed for as long as possible. Despite the temptation to regularly check the wound this may in turn introduce an infection.
- Tubes are sometimes placed to drain fluid away but are often removed within a few days.
- Breathing and leg exercises can reduce risk of chest infection and blood clots after surgery. Your nurse or physiotherapist can teach you these exercises.
- Although infections can usually be treated with antibiotics, they are more effective if treated quickly.
- It is normal to feel some pain following surgery but this can be adequately controlled with painkillers. If you are in pain then inform your doctor so that they can prescribe appropriate painkillers and check that the wound is healing properly.
- It is important to eat well during the healing phase so ensure that your diet is healthy and nutritious

Living With and Beyond Cancer Information Sheet

23. Wound care after surgery - Resources/Information

Local Resources:

Local resources	GP, Practice Nurse, CNS, Oncologist
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National Resources:

NHS Choices — www.nhs.uk	Advice tools and tips to help you make the best choices about your health and wellbeing.
Macmillan Cancer Support Line www.macmillan.org.uk Call 0808 808 00 00 — 7 days a week 8.00am—8.00pm	Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. Please note that calls to this number are not free when made from outside the UK. If you are calling from outside of the UK call on +44 207 091 2230
Macmillan on-line Community	Online support— to share experiences or vent your emotions find others who understand—join today!
Marie Curie Support Line — Living with a terminal illness and looking for support www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/marie-curie-support	Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. The Support Line is open 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday and 11am – 5pm Saturday

Other Resources :

Macmillan Booklets:	Managing the symptoms of cancer- MAC11671
	Healthy eating and cancer – MAC13612_E03_N
	Recipes for people affected by cancer – MAC15201_E06_N