

Caring for your wound at home

Bathing

Can I have a bath or a shower when I go home?

Yes, you can have a bath or a shower.

If your wound does not have a dressing in place when you go home, then you can have a bath or a shower, let clear water run over the wound after you have washed as normal.

If your wound does have a dressing then you can usually still bathe or shower, however dressings can absorb water and may require changing shortly after your shower. For this reason it is advisable to shower on the day that the dressing is due to be changed.

Showering is preferable to bathing, so that the wound doesn't 'soak' in water.

Avoid using soap, shower gel, body lotion, talcum powder or other bathing products *directly* over your healing wound; and do not rub the area, as this might be painful and could delay healing.

Dressings

Does my wound need a dressing?

No, as long as your wound is dry and healed.

Yes, a dressing may be required if

- any fluid is coming from the wound
- on the advice of a professional to reduce the risk of infection
- to protect the area until your wound has healed
- to prevent stitches or clips catching on clothing

If a dressing is needed, the ward staff will have arranged for you to be seen by a nurse in the community, usually a district nurse at home. Otherwise you may be advised to remove the dressing yourself the day after you go home and then leave the wound without a dressing.

Stitches

Dissolvable stitches will usually dissolve in about six weeks. In some cases you may have stitches or clips that require removal. Ward staff will let you know this before you go home and will make arrangements for them to be removed.

Bruising

If you have had catheter studies (angiogram/angioplasty) you should check the wound site for the first few days when you go home. There may be some bruising but not usually swelling. Bruising should settle after 2 weeks.

Bleeding

Following catheter studies (angiogram/ angioplasty), if the wound bleeds then apply pressure just above the wound for about 20 minutes

For other wounds place a pad or tissues on the wound and press for about 20 minutes.

If the bleeding does not stop or you have numbness, pain or swelling you should contact your G.P or visit A&E or Walk in Centre.

It is common to experience bruising, tenderness and slight discomfort on movement.

Infection

If you develop an infection you will usually be treated with a course of antibiotics. You're more likely to develop an infection if you:

- smoke
- have diabetes or a condition that affects healing
- have a condition or treatment that affects your immune system

It's important that you know how to tell if you're developing an infection after you go home. If your wound becomes infected, you may see any of the following symptoms:

- Redness to the skin around your wound
- Heat or swelling around the wound
- A thicker fluid coming away from the wound
- An unpleasant smell
- An increase in your wound pain
- Any opening or gaping of the wound
- Develop a temperature
- Feel generally unwell

Who do I contact if I have any problems after I go home?

You can either contact your G.P or visit a Walk in Centre, for more serious concerns, you could visit A&E; or telephone Tissue Viability Service at Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital directly on 0151 600 1324 for advice and/or to arrange a review.