

## 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. (*See Pain elsewhere in this directory.*)
- It is important to eat well during the healing phase so ensure that your diet is healthy and nutritious.

## Local Resources:

Resource	Contact Details
<b>Mustard Tree Cancer Support &amp; Triangle Drop In Centres</b> Ask questions, share concerns, offers a range of services including benefits advice. Support, advice and information for cancer patients and their carers	<b>Mustard Tree, Derriford Hospital:</b> Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm 01752 430060/01752 431468 <b>Kingsbridge:</b> Tuesdays 10am to 4pm 01548 852349 <b>Liskeard:</b> Thursdays 10am to 4pm 01579 373500 <b>Tavistock:</b> Fridays 10am to 4pm 01822 615935
<b>Other Resources</b>	Your GP, Oncology Doctor, Specialist Nurse or District Nurse.

## National Resources:

Resource	Contact Details
<b>Cancer Research UK</b>	<a href="http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/type">http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/type</a>
<b>Macmillan Cancer Support</b> Provide comprehensive advice and information on all aspects of cancer.	<a href="http://www.macmillan.org.uk">www.macmillan.org.uk</a> <b>0808 808 0000</b> (Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm)

## Further Information:

<b>Macmillan Cancer Support booklets:</b> – available free from the Mustard Tree Macmillan Centre
Controlling cancer pain
Controlling the symptoms of cancer
Healthy eating and cancer
Recipes for people affected by cancer