

Wound care

This information is about wound care. You may have a wound from an operation (a surgical wound). For example, you may have had [surgery](#) to remove a cancer or to remove a piece of tissue for testing (a [biopsy](#)).

The most common complications after surgery are:

- wound infection
- bleeding from the wound.

If your wound becomes hot or painful, tell your nurse or doctor straight away. It is also important to tell them if it starts to bleed or leak, even after you go home. You may be given antibiotics to help prevent wound infection.

Some people develop a wound when their cancer breaks through the skin. This is called an [ulcerating cancer wound](#). They are rare and most people never develop one. If you develop an ulcerating wound, your doctor and nurse will advise you how to care for the wound and control the symptoms.

Tips for managing your surgical wound

After your operation, your nurse will explain:

- how to keep the wound clean
- if and when any dressings should be changed or removed
- when any clips or stitches need to be removed
- who will help you when you go home, and how to get support
- who to contact if you have complications such as infection or bleeding after you go home
- painkillers you may need
- any things you need to avoid until you recover, such as heavy lifting or driving.

Clips or stitches are usually removed by a practice nurse at your GP surgery after you go home. Some surgeons use dissolving stitches, which do not need to be removed.

By the time you go home, your pain will be controlled by tablets. You will be given painkillers to take at home, and told how often to take them.

There are also things you can do to help your recovery:

- Follow the advice from your healthcare team.
- Keep up with any exercises you were asked to do.
- [Eat well](#) – a healthy, balanced diet gives you all the nutrients you need to keep your body working well.
- Get enough rest.
- Do some [gentle exercise](#) and try to build it up gradually.

[Stopping smoking](#) makes it more likely that your wounds will heal better. It is best to stop smoking at least 2 weeks before surgery. But stopping has benefits at any time. Your GP and hospital will support you.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on be.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- [Managing the symptoms of cancer](#)
- [Healthy eating and cancer](#)
- [Managing cancer pain](#)
- [Having surgery – easy read](#)
- [Stay healthy – Stop smoking – easy read](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

Further Macmillan support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit macmillan.org.uk where you can [chat to us online](#).

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

Other useful contact details

- NHS Smokefree (England) – visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree or call 0300 123 1044
- NHS Inform (Scotland) – visit www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking or call 0800 84 84 84
- Help me Quit (Wales) – visit www.helpmequit.wales or call 0800 085 2219
- Want2stop (Northern Ireland) – visit www.stopsmokingni.info

Notes and questions
