

Wound care

This information is about wound care. You may have a wound because you have had surgery (a surgical wound). Surgery can be done for different reasons. For example, you may have surgery to remove a cancer or to remove a piece of tissue for testing (a biopsy).

Surgical wounds are closed using clips or stitches. These are usually removed after you go home. Some surgeons use dissolving stitches, which do not need to be removed.

You may have a tube (drain) in your wound to drain excess fluid into a small bottle. This is usually removed after a few days.

The most common complications after surgery are:

- wound infection
- bleeding from the wound.

It is important to let your nurse or doctor know straight away if your wound becomes hot, painful or starts to bleed or leak any fluids, even after you go home.

You may be given antibiotics to help prevent wound infection.

Some people with cancer develop a wound if a cancer below the skin 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, you are usually supported by a team of nurses. They will advise you on how to care for the wound and explain how the symptoms can be controlled.

Tips for managing your surgical wound

- Your nurse or doctor will tell you how to care for your wound.
- Ask your nurse who will help you with your wound if you need it when you go home, and how to get support.
- Try to eat well. A healthy, balanced diet gives you all the nutrients you need to keep your body working well.
- If you smoke, giving up can help your wound heal more quickly. It is best to give up at least 8 weeks before the operation. But it will even help if you stop smoking for a few weeks or just after the surgery. You can get support to help you stop smoking.
- It is normal to have some pain or discomfort for a few days, but this will be controlled with painkillers. Let your doctor or nurse know if the pain is not controlled.
- At first your scar will be red if you have white skin, or darker if you have dark skin. Over time, this will fade.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
• NHS Smokefree (England)	www.nhs.uk/smokefree
• NHS Inform (Scotland)	www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking
• Help me Quit (Wales)	www.helpmequit.wales
• Want2stop (Northern Ireland)	www.want2stop.info

Further information

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/other-side-effects/ulcerating-wounds

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on be.macmillan.org.uk

- **Managing the symptoms of cancer**
- **Giving up smoking**
- **Healthy eating and cancer**
- **Managing cancer pain**

More information and 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

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.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these, visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call our support line.