

# Wound care

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

The most common complications after surgery are wound infection and bleeding from the wound. When you go home, the nurse might also ask you to check your wound or the area around the dressing (if you have to keep the dressing on). This is to check there are no signs of infection and that it is healing well. Or you may have a district nurse who will do this.

Signs of infection can include:

- heat, pain, swelling or redness or a darker change in skin colour over the wound, around the scar, or both.
- fluid coming from the wound (discharge), which can smell
- a temperature above 37.5°C or above 99.5°F (a fever)
- feeling shivery and shaky
- feeling generally unwell, even with a normal temperature.

If you have any signs of infection, contact your doctor or nurse straight away on the number you have been given. **It is important that you follow any advice you have been given by your healthcare team.**

Some people develop a wound when a tumour grows and breaks through the skin. They are rare and most people never develop one. This is called an [ulcerating cancer wound](#). 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 surgery](#), before you go home, the nurses will give you advice. They can explain if and when your dressings will be changed, and by who. They will tell how to keep the wound clean and give you advice about baths and showers. You will have contact details for who to call if you are worried about your wound, and a letter for your practice or district nurse.
- Surgical 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.
- You will be on tablets or oral medicines before you can go home. You may also be given oral or tablet [painkillers](#) to take home, and told how often you should take them.
- Your nurse or doctor may also give you advice about [recovery](#). Depending on your operation, they may advise you about things to avoid or be careful with. This could include lifting or heavy work in or around the home, [driving](#), certain physical activities or having [sex](#).
- Follow the advice your healthcare team gives you. Keep up with any exercises you were asked to do, try to [eat healthily](#) and get enough rest. You may be able to do some [gentle exercise](#) and build it up gradually.
- Stopping smoking makes it more likely that your wounds will heal better. If you smoke, it is best to [stop smoking](#) at least 2 weeks before surgery. But stopping at any time has benefits. Your GP and hospital team will support you. There are NHS stop smoking services available.

## Macmillan Cancer Support resources

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

- MAC11671 [Managing the symptoms of cancer](#)
- MAC13612 [Healthy eating and cancer](#)
- MAC11670 [Managing cancer pain](#)
- MAC16320 [Having surgery](#) – easy read
- MAC16337 [Eat a healthy diet](#) – easy read

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line on **0808 808 00 00**.

## 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](https://macmillan.org.uk) to [chat online](#) to one of our team.

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

If you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#). Our free [Macmillan Buddy service](#) can arrange weekly calls with a friendly volunteer who understands what you're going through.

## Other useful contact details

- NHS Better Health Quit Smoking (England) – visit [www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking](https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking) or call **0300 123 1044**
- NHS Inform Stop Smoking (Scotland) – [www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking](https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking) or call **0800 84 84 84**
- Help me Quit (Wales) – visit [www.helpmequit.wales](https://www.helpmequit.wales) or call **0800 085 2219**
- Want2stop (Northern Ireland) – visit [www.stopsmokingni.info](https://www.stopsmokingni.info)

## Notes and questions

---

---

---

---