

Important information

After surgery has been performed on the head or neck area, please ensure you:

- keep the wound and dressings **dry** and **clean** for 5 days
- avoid bending down for at least 24 hours
- do not do vigorous exercise or physical work
- avoid drinking alcohol 24 hours before or after surgery
- avoid smoking and smoky atmospheres until your wound has healed

Please be aware that creams and ointments containing paraffin or petroleum jelly (eg. Vaseline), catch fire easily. Avoid smoking or contact with high heat if you have this on your face or mouth. It could cause serious burns.

Will I be in any discomfort afterwards?

Once the local anaesthetic has worn off there is likely to be some tenderness and pain for 2-3 days. Take simple painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen for relief. It is important to read and follow the instructions, warnings and dosage on your packet or bottle and to avoid ibuprofen if you are allergic to aspirin.

If you are prescribed antibiotics, complete the course.

If you develop excessive pain or leakage from the wound contact the maxillofacial or plastic surgery doctor on call at hospital for advice (see back page.)

What should I do if there is bleeding?

If any bleeding occurs, apply continuous firm pressure with a clean pad directly on the wound for 20 minutes. Repeat as necessary. If the bleeding continues or is excessive, seek medical advice as above.

Looking after your dressings

Keep dressings clean, dry and in place for 5 days unless told otherwise by your QVH team.

If dressings get wet or dirty during this time, contact us for advice.

After 5 days, you should start bathing or showering the dressing. This regular wetting and drying allows it to come away by itself.

Never pull a firmly stuck dressing off and do not remove any sticky white strips from directly over the wound. If these are steristrips they will come away themselves in the same way as dressings. They may loosen a bit during the first few days on their own.

Caring for your stitches

After dressings have come off, continue to keep them clean in the shower or bath every day.

We will give you advice about whether they need removing and we will either agree an outpatient appointment with you or, if it's more convenient, we may ask you to return to your GP practice to see a nurse for the stitches to be removed.

Normally, stitches in the head and neck area are removed after five to seven days.

On the scalp, they may stay in place for up to two weeks. Stitches in other areas of the body may also remain for longer.

If scabs appear over the stitches do not pick them off.

Dissolving stitches do not usually need removing. If any stitch material is still visible after 21 days, contact us for advice.

If your wound is increasingly painful, develops redness, swelling, oozing or feels hot contact us as soon as possible.

Infection can cause a wound to re-open which will delay healing.

Caring for your scar

Any operation on or through skin will leave a permanent scar. Initially, the scar may look red, lumpy and raised.

Regular massage to the scar with a non-perfumed moisturising cream, using firm circular movements, will help improve its appearance. Using sunflower or vegetable oil for this purpose is also effective, but we do not advise the use of vitamin E oil, olive oil or aqueous cream.

The scar may take one to two years to soften and fade. Apply a high factor (SPF 50+) sun block on bright days even when the temperature is cool, because newly healed wounds and scars will burn more easily during the first couple of years. Wound infection can lead to problems with scar formation such as stretching or thickening. Some skin types and certain areas of the

Post-operative care after your minor operation

body may be prone to the development of hypertrophic or keloid scars, which stay raised, lumpy, or red and can feel itchy.

If you have any concerns about your scar, contact your GP who may refer you back to the hospital.

People heal at different rates, so do not worry if recovery seems slower than expected. Current medical health, diet and smoking are factors that affect the rate at which wounds heal.

Instructions for **shave excision** wounds

Keep the dressing clean and dry for five days. We will give you instructions if there is any tape to be removed. The dressing underneath may stick to the wound. If this happens, moisten it with water until it becomes jelly-like and peels off.

When a scab forms, it must be left in place. After a few weeks, once the wound is completely healed, massage the scar frequently with a light non-perfumed moisturising cream.

Instructions following general anaesthetic

We should already have advised you of the importance of having someone stay with you for the first 24 hours after your procedure. Judgement and responses are affected and you may feel light-headed or nauseous.

For at least 24 hours, preferably 48 hours you must not drive, look after children alone, use machinery or power tools or sign legal documents.

Follow-up appointments

- GP surgery: please make an appointment with the practice nurse
- Dressings clinic at location _____

Plastics: 01342 414442 between 9am - 5pm

- Maxillofacial unit at location _____

01342 414708 usual opening times are Monday to Friday 8.30am–5pm.

Further questions

If you have any concerns or questions before your next outpatient clinic appointment, please contact Switchboard at QVH Tel: 01342 414000 and ask for the secretary of your named consultant.

For emergencies out of hours, please ask for the doctor on call for the specialty under which you have been treated.

If you need to confirm, enquire about or cancel your appointment, please call the Appointments line on 01342 414141

Any further information

Please ask if you would like this leaflet in larger print or a different format.

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