

About the burns outreach service

The burns outreach service is a specialist burns service led by a specialist burns nurse. Outreach is based at the Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (QVH), East Grinstead, West Sussex. The outreach service makes specialist burns care available to people across Kent, Surrey and Sussex who are unable to access services on-site at QVH.

The burns outreach nurse will visit you in the hospital you have been admitted to, at home or in your nursing home. The nurse will assess your burn injury, take photographs of the burn and develop a care plan for your burn.

The burns outreach nurse is part of a multi-disciplinary team at QVH. The burns team includes surgeons, anaesthetists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychological therapists, pain specialists, dietitians and pharmacists. Your care will be regularly reviewed by the team and a plan made. Your plan may involve surgery (debridement, skin grafting) or dressings to heal your burn.

You will be fully informed and involved in any decisions about your plan, which may change over time. The burns outreach service will remain part of your care until your burn has healed or improved to such an extent that it no longer needs specialist input.

If you have been admitted to your local hospital

It may be necessary for you to stay in your local hospital following your burn injury to prioritise other medical or surgical problems that need to be diagnosed, treated or stabilised.

The outreach nurse will work closely with the medical, surgical and nursing teams at your local hospital to ensure your plan is followed. The hospital team will be responsible for your regular dressing changes. Advice and support are also available from outreach for the teams treating you.

You may be transferred to QVH for an outpatient appointment or for surgery and then return to your local hospital. If you are discharged from hospital, your burns care will continue in the community.

If the outreach nurse visits you at home

Your community nurse, GP, ambulance service or practice nurse may have referred you to the burns service. The outreach nurse will visit you in the community if you require a home visit or have been discharged home from hospital.

Your community nursing team will be responsible for your regular dressing changes. Please ensure you have their contact details. Your burns care plan will be reviewed by the burns outreach nurse on a regular basis and if the community nursing team need advice or have concerns.

Looking after your burn injury

Pain

Some pain from a burn injury is expected but this must be at tolerable levels. You may have been prescribed painkillers to manage your burn injury. Pain is often worse on movement or when you are having a dressing change, so you may be given additional painkillers prior to this activity. Your pain is not well controlled if it is preventing you from moving, sleeping or affecting your mental wellbeing. Nurses will regularly assess your pain but please inform your community nurses or hospital nurses if your pain is poorly controlled. Your painkillers can then be reviewed and adjusted to ensure you are comfortable.

Dressings

Keep your dressings clean and dry. If the dressings become wet, they will need to be changed. The outreach nurse/community nurses will advise you on showering your burn. Wash your hands before and after touching your dressings or your burn. If your dressings slip or are uncomfortable, please feedback to the nurses doing your dressing.

Burn wounds and infection

High levels of discharge (yellow or brownish green) and mild malodour is normal in some burns and does not indicate an infection or a need for antibiotics. If your dressings are leaking or the smell is becoming a problem, please let your nurse or outreach nurse know. This can usually be resolved with changing the type of dressing used or increasing the frequency of the dressing changes.

Signs of infection that need attention

Feeling unwell

A high temperature or feeling feverish

A persistent increase in pain with no clear cause e.g. too much activity.

Offensive smell from the burn

Pus discharge from the burn

Redness appearing around your dressing or spreading at the affected area, which may be hot and/or painful to touch.

If you think you might have an infection, please make contact urgently with your local nursing team or the burns service.

Activities and rest

It is important to balance daily activities with periods of rest. It is normal to require more rest than usual during this time, so take the rest when you need it. Elevation when at rest is very important if your burn injury affects your arms, hands, legs or feet. Elevation helps to reduce swelling, pain and healing problems. If your burn affects a joint, you will be given exercises

Burns Outreach Service

Patient Information

to do. It is important to regularly move the joint to prevent stiffness and pain. Exercise helps to maintain the full range of movement and function of the joint. It is normal for a burn to feel tight as it heals. You cannot damage the wound by exercising/stretching the area. Please let the outreach nurse know if you have any questions or concerns about daily activities / hobbies you will do after your burn injury.

Diet

It is important to maintain a healthy, balanced diet. Your protein and calorie intake needs have increased now that your body is trying to heal from a burn injury. Good sources of protein include meat, eggs, milk, yoghurt, cheese, soya, beans, nuts, seeds. Please ensure you drink plenty of water (be aware of any fluid restrictions you may have been advised to follow by your medical team).

Your wellbeing

A burn injury can be very traumatic for you, your friends and your family. Thinking frequently about the circumstances of your burn injury and the resulting injury is a normal reaction to trauma. You may experience flashbacks and nightmares. Everyone's reaction to a burn injury is different; some people might not have this experience. If anything, at any time, is affecting your wellbeing and you would like to talk to someone, please talk to the burns outreach nurse who can offer support.

Contact details for patients

Burns Outreach Service (for non-urgent enquiries)
Working hours: 07:30 – 20:00 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday)
Tel: 07591 347 878
Please leave a voicemail message with your name and phone number.

Burns Unit (for urgent enquiries)
24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Tel: 01342 414440

Please contact your community nursing team if there is an urgent problem with your dressing, for example, it has fallen off.

Please call NHS 111 for urgent medical help/advice for a non-life-threatening condition.

Please call 999 for emergency, life-threatening medical help.

If you'd like to find out how you can support QVH, please visit www.supportqvh.org



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

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