



Caring for your neurosurgical wound Brain Tumour patients

This leaflet provides information on how to care for your neurosurgical wound after you leave hospital. Below are measures you can take to help lower the chances of your wound getting infected and to promote healing.

Changing the dressing

The original dressing should be left in place for at least two days (48 hours after your surgery), or as advised by the neuro team. It can be removed after this time, provided that the wound is dry and not oozing. The wound must be kept dry. If the dressing becomes wet from blood or any other liquid it must be changed. When changing the dressing, you should:

- Wash your hands with soap and water beforehand.
- Carefully take the old dressing off.
- Be careful not to touch the healing wound with your fingers.

After 48 hours, if the wound is healing it can be left without a dressing, open to air.

The ward may give you a supply of replacement dressings to use at home. When applying these, take care not to touch the inside of the dressing so that it remains clean. Do not apply antiseptic creams or other ointments under the dressing.

Care of stitches/clips/staples

The time dissolving (**absorbable**) stitches take to absorb can vary. They are usually white/cream in colour. Most types will usually dissolve or fall out within 7-10 days, although it may be a few weeks before they disappear completely.

Other wound closure methods such as **clips or non-dissolvable sutures** (usually blue/black in colour) need to be removed between 7-14 days – your discharge letter should detail removal date, method and where you should attend for removal. This is usually at your GP surgery, by the practice nurse. If this is unclear, you can contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) for advice (if you have clips you will be discharged with clip removers to take to the GP/practice nurse).

You may see nylon threads (the ends of the stitches) poking out of the healing scar. Please do not pull on these.

If you are worried about the stitches/ clips or staples, always seek advice from your GP or contact your CNS team. The CNS team can arrange to see you in clinic, arrange surgical review if required, or review a wound photo via email.

Showering and hair washing

You are normally advised to wait 72 hours before showering and/or hair washing, unless advised otherwise.

- Showering is preferable to bathing.
- Some waterproof dressings can be left in place whilst you take a shower. Absorbent dressings need to be removed before taking a shower.
- Do not put any skin care products directly onto the healing wound.
- Do not worry if you get the wound wet, but do not vigorously rub the wound area as this will cause pain and could delay the healing process.
- Pat the wound gently with a clean towel after showering and ensure it is fully dry.

Problems with wound healing

Your wound will be monitored whilst you remain in hospital, but it is important that you know how to tell if you are developing an infection after you go home. If a wound becomes infected, it may:

- Become more painful.
- Become red or swollen.
- Leak clear fluid, pus or blood.
- Have an unpleasant smell.

Contacts/further information

If you develop a high temperature, notice any of the signs mentioned above, or have any concerns about your wound, then contact your CNS team: 0121 371 4740

braintumourspecialistnurses@uhb.nhs.uk

If out of hours, please attend your local Emergency Dept for review where they can speak to the Neurosurgical team directly if required.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. My wound is swollen with no other symptoms. What should I do?
Please take a picture and send to your CNS team for review via the brain tumour email. braintumourspecialistnurses@uhb.nhs.uk, or seek advice from your GP.
If you wear glasses and the arm is indenting the wound, please consider removing this.
2. Can I cover my head with a hat, scarf, wig or religious head covering?
Yes, when you go out you can do this as long as it is not a tight fit, however when indoors please remove your head covering.
3. Can I dye my hair?
Not immediately. You should wait until you have come to clinic to explore if you need further treatment.

Information for Patients

4. My wound has opened, what should I do?
Please attend your local Emergency Department, taking your discharge letter with you.
During office hours you can also seek advice from your CNS team.
5. Do I need to keep hair off my wound?
Ideally yes if possible, until clips/sutures are removed/dissolved.

(This is adapted from NICE guidelines for surgical site infections, prevention and treatment, NG125)

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.