

# Caring for your child's orthopaedic wound at home

## **Wounds and how long they take to heal**

After orthopaedic surgery your child might have a wound. The site of this wound will depend on the type of surgery your child has had.

Wounds should have started healing well by about 2 weeks after surgery. We expect wounds to be fully healed (all scabs have come off the entire wound, leaving no open areas) within 1-2 months. Complete recovery (the wound is no longer raised or red, appears flat and white on the skin) can sometimes take up to a year.

## **General management plan**

Wound care planning is different for each patient, so specific advice will be given to you and your child before they are discharged.

As a general guide, orthopaedic wounds are dressed for 10-14 days after surgery. Where possible, stitches (sutures) will be dissolvable (so do not need removing). Wounds are then assessed by a medical professional at Evelina London, the nurse at your GP's practice, or a community nurse at your home.

## **Observation and changes to the wound**

It is important to monitor your child's wounds for any changes, because they could mean there is an infection or complication.

If any of these signs occur you should contact Savannah Ward immediately for advice.

Signs of concern would be:

- increasing redness around the wound and surrounding area
- Swelling (inflammation) around the wound or limb
- increased pain
- a bad smell coming from the wound or dressing
- open areas of the wound itself
- pus or discharge coming from the wound, or showing through the dressing.
- High temperature, being sick (vomiting) or feeling sick (nausea).

## Washing and bathing

The dressings used to cover your child's wound are not waterproof. Please keep the dressings clean and dry. We suggest flannel washing during this time.

Getting the wound wet before it is healed can cause damage to the newly forming skin causing it to re-open. It can also allow infection into the wound, which would have a huge impact on healing.

Once the wounds are fully healed and your child is ready to return to having baths or showers, it is important to:

- pat the area when washing and drying. Do not scrub or rub the wound
- not use fragranced soaps and body lotions at first as they can irritate the skin.

Wounds that are healing can be very itchy and the skin can be dry and irritated by the dressings. It is very important that your child does not scratch the area as this will cause damage and possible infection.

## Managing your child's wound at home

- Any scabbing or dry areas should be left to fall off in their own time.
- Once the wound is fully healed (1-2 months) a plain, unperfumed moisturiser or Bio-Oil® can be used to help with itching and the appearance of the scar. Massage down the scar line in circular motions.
- The scar will eventually fade and become less red in colour.
- Using sun cream when out in direct sunlight if the scar is exposed is very important. The area will be sensitive to the sun for about 2 years after surgery.

Important considerations when caring for your child at home are:

- Take care when positioning your child and handling them until the wound has fully healed. Pressure directly onto the wound can cause pain and bruising. Please ask for advice about this from medical professionals before discharge.
- Try to avoid touching the skin over a wound site. It is very delicate and fragile and can be tender, painful or numb to touch. It can also lead to skin breakdown or infection unless the wound is fully healed.
- If you have to touch the wound, you must wash your hands thoroughly before and afterwards. Keep your nails cut short if possible..
- Follow discharge instructions about wound care and contact.

## Frequently asked questions

### **What if my child's dressing gets wet, dirty or is falling off?**

If the dressing gets wet or dirty please contact the clinician who would be reviewing the wound at 10-14 days, to change the dressing as a matter of urgency. If the edges of the dressing are coming away from the skin, please secure the existing dressing. You will have been given a clear Tegaderm™ dressing for this before discharge. Alternatively please call the Evelina team (specialist nurse or, out of hours Savannah Ward) for advice.

### **I can feel a lump/see a stitch at the end of the wound?**

The internal stitches can take time to dissolve under the skin, so it is possible to feel the knot under the skin or see the suture ends. Sometimes it is necessary to trim the suture ends when the dressing is removed. If the lump changes in size or shows any signs of concern, please contact the Evelina team (specialist nurse or, out of hours Savannah Ward) for advice.

### **I'm concerned about the wound, what should I do?**

You should contact the Evelina team (specialist nurse or, out of hours Savannah Ward) immediately - the first contact should be the orthopaedic specialist nurse. The team will want as much information as possible over the phone, and might ask for photographs to be sent to them (only of the wound site). A plan will be made accordingly. Outside of normal working hours, Savannah Ward should be contacted and they can tell the surgeon by phone.

**When can my child return to bathing and swimming?**

Once a wound is healed with no scabbing visible, and a dressing is no longer needed then a shower or bath is acceptable.

Swimming is also fine once the wound is fully healed with no open areas or scabbing visible.

Some patients choose to wait until their 4- or 6-week review with the surgeon for this to be confirmed.

**Wound plan**

We have made an appointment for your child

at .....

(This section is for professional use only)



Patient's surgeon .....

Date of surgery .....

Date of discharge .....

Type of operation .....

The above patient recovered well from their orthopaedic surgery, at Evelina London Children’s Hospital, and has been discharged home.

We would be grateful if you could review the wound sites 10-14 days after surgery.

The patient has the following wound sites .....

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All wound areas are covered with Tegaderm pads or Cosmopore® dressings. All stitches are dissolvable.

At the appointment, please can you remove all dressings and review the wounds. Please redress, if needed, until dry. Spare dressings will be provided.

Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's wound, please contact the orthopaedic specialist nurse, **tel:** 07798 712107 or bleep 3129, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. To bleep the nurse, call the hospital switchboard, **tel:** 020 7188 7188 and ask for the bleep desk. Ask for bleep 3129 and wait for a response. This will connect you to the nurse directly. Outside of these hours, please call Savannah Ward, **tel:** 020 7188 5941.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **tel:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm, **email:** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline, **tel:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, **email:** [mymedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:mymedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)



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