

If the operation site is on your arms, legs or back you should avoid activities or sport that put a strain on the wound for at least the first 4 weeks.

What about the scar?

Any operation will result in a scar. In most cases the scar will appear pink and then eventually virtually disappear. Sometimes the scar may remain more visible and look a slightly different colour to the skin near it. A week after the stitches have been removed you can start gently rubbing in a simple moisturising cream once or twice a day. This helps to soften the scar tissue. Do not use any form of oil. It can take over 6 months for the scar to settle down after the operation.

Will I need another appointment?

Some patients will be given an appointment to return to the Maxillofacial clinic to receive the results of the biopsy test and to check the operation site and ensure that it has healed fully. Not everyone needs to be seen again and we will tell you if this is the case. We will then write to you and your doctor/dentist with the results of any biopsy test.

Reference sources

- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
- www.besttreatment.co.uk

Contact details

For further information or advice please telephone **01483 571122** and ask for the on-call Maxillofacial doctor.

Maxillo Facial Clinic **01483 406775**

Day Surgery

Telephone: 01483 406783

Telephone: 01483 406784 (answering machine)

Surgical Short Stay

Telephone: 01483 406828

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–4.00pm
Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Caring for facial and other skin wounds



**Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery
Department**
Including Day Surgery and
Surgical Short Stay

After your recent treatment you may have stitches and a dressing. This leaflet offers advice to help you care for your wound at home to allow healing to take place.

What should I do after the operation when I get home?

- After the operation we suggest you go home and rest for the next 24 hours. It is not a good idea to rush back to work or to do in any sport.
- There will be some pain and soreness once the numbness wears off so take your painkilling tablets regularly. As the pain eases off over the next few days cut down on the painkilling tablets.
- If you are taking painkilling tablets do not drink alcohol.

Are there problems to look out for?

- **Bleeding:** this is not usually a problem. Sometimes there may be a slight ooze around the stitches under the dressing (if used). Use a clean handkerchief or tissue and press firmly on the wound for 15 minutes.
- **Infection:** your wound may get infected. The tell-tale signs are swelling, redness and soreness around the wound. The skin around the wound may feel hot and the wound might start producing pus or liquid. You may feel hot and unwell. If you think there is some infection present then you must contact our department as you may need a course of antibiotic tablets.

What about washing?

You must keep the wound dry for at least the first 48 hours. Do not allow your wound to get wet or soggy when under the shower or washing your hair. You might be able to protect the area with a clean, dry flannel. If hair washing would get the wound wet then sit with your head resting backwards over the sink and get a relative or friend to help you.

What about the dressing?

In most cases these should remain in place until you have the stitches removed. In all events dressings should be left on for at least 48 hours. At this time if the dressing has dried blood on it, it is possible to gently peel off the strips and clean around the stitches with some boiled water from the kettle (cool it first) and a cotton wool bud or similar.

If you are in any doubt about the condition of the wound or the dressings seek advice from the maxillofacial department.

What about the stitches?

The length of time your stitches stay in place will depend on the type of operation you needed, the sort of stitch used and where exactly your wound is. Stitches are removed from 5-10 days onwards.

You will be advised as to when and where to have your stitches removed before you leave the hospital. Sometimes dissolving stitches are used which do not need to be removed.

Any other advice?

- Do not keep touching your wound with your fingers or you might spread germs that can cause an infection. If you need to clean your wound wash your hands first. Keep your wound covered if you are going to be in a dirty or dusty area or near animals. Strong sun can burn the new scar then it may not heal so well.
- Keep your wound out of direct sunlight. Sun can interfere with the healing process and can damage the scar. This is particularly important during the first few weeks. Once the wound has healed cover it with sunscreen cream with a Factor 30 or above if you are going to be out in the open. Do this for at least 6 months following your operation.
- Once the stitches have been removed the wound will continue to heal. It can take up to a month to regain its strength. Avoid pulling on the area, scratching it or knocking it.
- If the wound is on your face and you wear glasses please wash them every day in warm soapy water.

When can I return to normal activities?

If you have had a local anaesthetic there are no restrictions on driving. However, if your operation is close to either eye there may be some swelling which may mean you cannot see properly. If you have had a general anaesthetic, you must not drive or be left alone for the first 24 hours.