

# Excision of Sebaceous Cysts

Day Surgery Unit

Surgical Short Stay Unit



Patient information leaflet

## What is a Sebaceous Cyst?

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Sebaceous cysts are sacs just under the skin that are filled with an oily substance called sebum. They appear dome shaped with a smooth surface and can look either white or the same colour as the skin. There is no known cause for these cysts and no known way to prevent them forming. They can vary in size, typically between 1 and 5 centimetres across. They mostly occur on the scalp, chest, back and genitalia.

## Is it harmful?

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The cysts are essentially harmless. However, they can become infected and painful, especially if they are constantly irritated by clothes or hairbrushes.

## What treatment options are available to me?

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Often, the cysts are small and do not require any treatment at all. They may disappear by themselves. However, if the cyst is large or infected, the treatment options are:

1. Antibiotics can help to resolve an infected cyst. This does not remove the cyst itself.
2. Surgical drainage of the cyst is performed under local anaesthetic. A small incision is made in the top of the cyst and the cyst contents are removed. It does not involve removing the sac itself, so the cyst often comes back.
3. Surgical excision involves the removal of the cyst contents and the sac, thus preventing the cyst from returning. This procedure is usually performed under local anaesthetic.

## What are the potential risks and complications of this operation?

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- **Bleeding** – Your wound may bleed a little after the operation. If this occurs, place a clean cotton handkerchief or cloth over the area and apply constant pressure for approximately 10-15 minutes.
- **Infection** – Your wound may become infected. If your wound becomes swollen, very red, very tender or starts producing a cloudy discharge, see your GP who may prescribe you antibiotics.
- **Scarring** – Any surgery will result in a scar. In most cases, the scar will appear pink to start with and then eventually virtually disappear. However, sometimes the scar may remain visible. It may

look a different colour from the surrounding skin or be raised above the surface of the skin. Rarely, the scar may feel numb or even be painful.

- **Recurrence** – There is a risk that the cyst sac may not be completely removed, which can result in the cyst returning.

## What happens after my operation?

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### How do I care for my wound and stitches?

Your wound will be stitched and covered with a protective dressing. The stitches may require removal in 5, 7 or 10 days time.

The ward staff will advise you if the stitches need to be removed at an outpatients appointment or whether to attend your own GP surgery.

Keep your wound clean and dry until your stitches have been removed, or advised by staff.

### Will it hurt?

The operation is performed under local anaesthetic and therefore painless. The area will remain numb for a few hours afterwards. However, once the local anaesthetic has worn off, the wound may feel tender and sore for a few days. Take your normal painkillers regularly to keep yourself comfortable. Please be aware all medications dispensed from the Day Surgery Unit carry a prescription charge, unless you are exempt.

## General advice

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- **Driving** – You may not drive for 24 hours if you have had a general anaesthetic. There are no driving restrictions if you have had a local anaesthetic.
- **Activities** – Avoid contact sports or any activities that may pull on your stitches.

## Will I need a follow up appointment?

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If a follow up appointment is required to see the surgeons in clinic, this will be sent in the post.

## Reference source

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- NHS Choices: [www.nhs.co.uk](http://www.nhs.co.uk)

**These notes will not cover everything.** If you want to know more, please ask.

## Contact details

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If you require further advice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### Day Surgery Unit

**Telephone:** 01483 406783 (Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm)

### Surgical Short Stay Unit

**Telephone:** 01483 406828 (Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm)

### Out of hours advice

Call 111 (formerly NHS Direct)

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

**In the case of an emergency, the on-call Maxillofacial Surgeon may be contacted through the hospital switchboard – [01483 571122](tel:01483571122)**

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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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](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm, 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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Author: Laura Ceurstemont & Sian Oates

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