

Anal Fistula

Day Surgery Unit



Patient information leaflet

What is an Anal Fistula?

An anal fistula is a track between the inside of the anal canal and the surrounding skin. A fistula results in intermittent or persistent discharge of blood, mucus or pus.

What treatment is available?

Few fistulas heal spontaneously. Surgery is the best treatment option in most cases.

What does surgery involve?

Surgery consists of careful examination under anaesthetic (EUA). The surgeon can then decide upon the best treatment for the fistula.

The techniques available include:

1. **Lay open procedure** – suitable for most anal fistulas which involve very little of the anal sphincter muscle. The tissue overlying the fistula track is cut, creating a flat wound which heals over.
2. **Insertion of a 'Seton'** – if the track is deep and involves a lot of anal muscle, your surgeon may elect simply to pass a plastic thread through the track, allowing for drainage of any discharge.

There are no alternatives to this procedure.

Before your surgery

You are advised to eat a high-fibre diet and drink plenty of fluids to keep your stools soft. This will help prevent constipation after your operation.

After your surgery

How do I look after wounds?

Some bleeding or discharge is normal after this procedure. You will be provided with gauze to place in your underwear to prevent soiling of your clothes.

You may bath or shower as normal.

Will the operation hurt?

The anal area may be tender following surgery. You will be provided with painkillers during your stay on the Unit and when you go home.

When can I resume normal activity?

You may return to normal activity as comfort allows.

When can I return to work?

You are strongly advised to take at least 2-3 days off work to recover from your anaesthetic. You may return to work when you can perform your job comfortably.

When can I drive?

You must not drive for at least 24 hours following a general anaesthetic. You may resume driving when you feel comfortable and are able to perform an emergency stop with ease.

Sexual intercourse

You may resume sexual activity as comfort allows.

What and when can I eat and drink?

Ensure that you eat a high-fibre diet and drink plenty of fluids to help prevent constipation.

Do I need a follow-up appointment?

If required, a follow-up appointment will be sent to you through the post.

Could there be any potential complications?

- Infection may occur following this procedure and is usually accompanied by marked tenderness and/or discharge of pus. Occasionally, bleeding is a problem. If you are worried about your bleeding or discharge, contact the Day Surgery Unit or your GP for advice.
- Any surgery involving the anal sphincter carries a small risk of incontinence of liquid or solid stools. The risk of incontinence in your particular case can be discussed with the surgical team before going ahead with your surgery.

Any complaints or comments?

If you have any complaints or comments please contact the Doctors or Nurses straight away. If this does not solve the problem please contact the Day Surgery Unit Manager on **01483 406732** or write to the Day Surgery Unit, The Royal Surrey County Hospital, Egerton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XX. Similarly if you have any other comments about the service provided we would also like to hear from you.

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

Reference sources

- Mr I.Jourdan and Prof. T.Rockall, RSCH Consultants.
- Further information can be found on www.nhs.uk/conditions/Anal-fistula/Pages/Introduction.aspx

Contact details

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

Out of hours advice

Telephone: Call 111 (formerly NHS Direct)

Website: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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–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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