

# How to care for your wound following your caesarean birth

## Information for patients

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This information leaflet is to help you give your wound the best chance of healing. Please ask your midwife or nurse if you have any further questions.

### Hygiene and wound care

At the time of your operation, your wound will be covered with a pad and film dressing. Do not remove this until 48 hours after your operation. If you have been given a negative pressure dressing (PICO dressing), this will be removed after 7 days. Whilst the dressing is applied you can wash or shower as normal, but **do not** take a bath.

Once your dressing is removed, it is unlikely that you will require any further dressings, as there will be new skin covering the wound which will protect it. Healing is still taking place under the surface.

It is important you keep the wound as clean and dry as possible to reduce your chance of developing an infection. You should shower once a day and pat the wound dry with a clean towel that is not used by other members of the family. You should wear cotton underwear with a high waist band to avoid any rubbing or irritation to the wound and try to wear loose comfortable clothes.

Remember to wash your hands after going to the toilet and nappy changing, and before touching the skin around your wound.

### Rest and exercise

To encourage healing you need to have a balance of rest and exercise. Try to rest when your baby is sleeping, or put your feet up whilst your baby feeds. Ask for help from friends and family members to do household chores such as cleaning and cooking.

Remember to take your painkillers as you need them. This will allow you to move more easily. Moving around will help your wound to heal and your body to strengthen. Take it easy to start with, move around the house, then build up to a 5-minute walk outside, before gradually working your way back to full walking ability.

### Good food

Eating a healthy and varied diet, including plenty of fruit and vegetables, starchy foods such as bread and pasta, and plenty of fibre and protein foods, will help your body to recover from your caesarean birth.

**Protein foods** needed to heal wounds include: eggs, cheese, milk, yoghurt, white and red meat, fish, pulses (e.g. lentils, beans, chickpeas), and plant-based protein alternatives such as tofu or Quorn.

**Fruit and vegetables** will provide you with vitamins and minerals, as well as fibre, to support wound healing.

**Do not** following a restrictive diet until after the wound has healed (and if you are breastfeeding, until you have stopped breastfeeding your baby) unless you are under the guidance of a dietician.

Remember to **drink plenty of fluids**, such as water. If you don't drink enough fluids, you may get constipated.

## Smoking

Even one cigarette reduces the blood flow and oxygen to the skin, stops vital nutrients being absorbed by your system and will increase your risk of a wound infection. Think about stopping not just for your wound to heal but also for your new baby as well.

There is advice and support locally to help you stop. You are 4 times more likely to give up smoking with Quit Your Way Scotland.

**Phone:** 0800 84 84 84

**Online:** <https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/helplines/quit-your-way-scotland/>



## Signs and symptoms of a wound infection

Your community midwife will inspect your wound when they visit you. Once your dressing has been removed you should also check your wound every day for any signs of infection. Lift up any skin folds over the wound and use a mirror if necessary to check the stitch line for changes.

If you know the normal signs and symptoms of a wound healing, then you can act when you think something is wrong. Most signs and symptoms of a wound infection are an exaggeration of the signs and symptoms of normal wound healing.

### Normal wound healing

- Slight redness or discolouration along wound
- Possibly some swelling
- Possibly some pain
- Small amount of clear or straw-coloured fluid coming from wound.

### Possible wound infection

- Increasing redness or discolouration (this may be less prominent in those with dark skin tones)
- Increasing swelling
- Increasing pain or tenderness (especially at rest)
- Green or yellow discharge (pus) or bleeding from the wound
- Smell coming from the wound that is offensive
- Developing a higher than normal body temperature (fever)
- Feeling generally unwell.

## Contact

**Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh:** Triage and Assessment 0131 242 2657

**St John's Hospital, Livingston:** Labour Suite 01506 524125

