



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Post cardiac surgery

Preventing wound infections
after cardiac surgery

Patient information

After leaving the hospital, please follow the advice of your healthcare team to limit the risk of infection

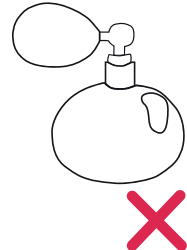
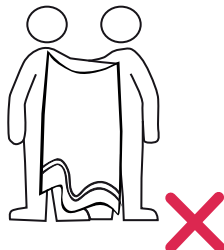
- Most operations involve making cuts (wounds) in the skin. Most wounds heal without causing problems. A wound can allow bacteria from the skin or environment to get into the body and this can cause an infection.
- The wound in the centre of your chest is referred to as the **'chest wound'**.
- Typically with cardiac surgery you may have an additional wound on your arm or leg.

Taking a shower with chest and leg/arm wounds

- If you have a dressing in place, do not get it wet.
- Talk to your practice nurse/GP for advice on managing your dressing.

If your wound is healed

- Showering is preferable to taking a bath.
- It is OK to let warm water run over your healed wound.



After the shower or bath, dry yourself thoroughly.
Pat your wounds dry, making sure not to rub them.



Using shower gel/Liquid soap is preferable to bars of soap.

Until your wounds have completely healed:



Do not share towels with other members of the household.



Do not apply lotion, powder or ointments to the wounds.



Do not use perfumed soap or perfumed body wash as this can irritate the wounds.

Your healthcare provider will look for these signs of infection, which include:

- Increased swelling or oozing from the wound.
- Increased pain or soreness.
- The wound has begun to open/gape.
- Redness around the wound.
- Feeling hotter along the wound line.
- Fever (greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Centigrade).

If you notice any of these signs or if you are not sure that your wounds are healing properly, it is important that you contact the hospital as soon as possible for advice.

**Level 7a, Millennium Building
01273 696955 Ext. 67260/64467**

Post-operative wound care

- If you have a dressing in place do not interfere or pick at it.
- Do not touch or peek at wounds while they are healing, this can increase the chances of infection.
- Follow a nutritious diet for the first 4 weeks to promote wound healing and then follow a healthy diet there after.

Remember: there are times when no matter how hard you try to prevent infection or take proper care of your surgical wound(s), an infection can develop.

If in doubt please contact:

**Level 7a Millennium Building
01273 696955 Ext. 67260/64467**

Other people you can call:

- District nurse if one is visiting you post discharge.
- Your practice nurse at your local GP.
- Your local GP.

**This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care
in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath**

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The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way
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