

# Caring for your Caesarean Section wound

A guide for patients from  
the Maternity Services

**Wishaw General Hospital**  
50 Netherton Street, Wishaw ML2 0DP  
Telephone 01698 361100

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## INTRODUCTION

Although the closed wound from your caesarean section appears small, it is important to understand that the incision also involves the underlying fatty tissues, muscle layers and the wall of your womb, not just the skin. Each layer has been repaired in reverse order before the surface layers are pulled together and closed, concealing the amount of surgery that has taken place below.

Although the visible external wound will be sealed within 24 - 48 hours, the underlying tissues continue to heal for months.

## IMMEDIATE WOUND MANAGEMENT

On return from the operating theatre your caesarean section wound will be covered with a dressing. This should be left undisturbed where possible for a minimum of 48 hours to allow healing to begin. During this time a shallow bath or shower is preferable to reduce the risk of contamination and displacing the dressing. Thereafter, the dressing can be removed and you can bathe normally. If the dressing is removed for any reason within 48 hours please tell a member of staff.

Your wound will have been closed with staples or sutures. Staff will tell you if, and when they need to be removed, this is usually 4 - 5 days after your surgery.

## ONGOING WOUND MANAGEMENT

You can minimise your risk of infection and aid the healing process by:

- ❖ Keep your wound clean and dry.
- ❖ Clean the bath prior to use.
- ❖ After bathing pat your wound dry carefully with a clean towel reserved for that use only.
- ❖ Choose your clothing carefully, ensure it is comfortable and does not cause friction against your wound.
- ❖ During coughing, place your hands on either side of your wound to provide support.
- ❖ Report any increased pain, tenderness or discharge to your midwife or GP immediately.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Sensitivity

Your wound and the surrounding area may feel sensitive for some time. This is normal and in most cases should gradually fade over time.

### Pain Management

Please take your pain killing medication as prescribed. If your pain is not controlled please speak to your midwife or GP.

### Moving and Handling

You should not lift anything heavy (*no more than a full kettle of water*), for at least 6 weeks. This is to protect the deeper tissues underneath your wound. Please see the leaflet provided by the physiotherapy department entitled Postnatal Advice for more detailed advice regarding exercise, rest, moving and handling, following caesarean section.

### Nutrition

Poor nutrition and low blood iron levels are known to delay healing of the abdominal wound following caesarean section. It is therefore important to follow a healthy, balanced diet to aid the healing process. If you want more advice speak to your midwife, GP, dietician or public health nurse.

### Obesity

Obesity is associated with a higher rate of wound infection after caesarean section. Your wound will also be under greater mechanical stress which can delay the healing process. It is therefore, even more important to pay particular attention to the care of your wound in such instances.