

Getting back to normality

It is helpful to have support from friends, family and carers in the early days. When you are feeling ready, you can gradually try to get back to normal a little at a time. Start gently and slowly build up the effort you put into your daily activity/household duties. Listen to your body and only do what you feel comfortable with.

Sex

It is safe to resume sexual intercourse after 4 - 6 weeks, when you are feeling ready.

Driving

When you want to start driving again you can talk to your GP to make sure you are ready. It is a good idea to discuss your policy with your insurance company before you start to drive again.

What are the signs of infection?

In the first 5 - 7 days, it is normal for your wound to look slightly red and may even be a little swollen. This is a normal sign of wound healing and your community nurse/midwife/GP will be able to reassure you when things look normal.

It is important that you report the following, as they may be signs that your wound is infected:

- Increased pain
- Redness (spreading around the wound)
- Fluid or discharge from the wound
- The wound looks like it is separating or gaping.
- Feeling unwell or having flu-like symptoms.

What should I do if I think my wound is infected?

If you are worried about your abdominal wound you can talk with your nurse, midwife or GP for advice.

Wound care advice for women following abdominal surgery

Who is this advice for?

This advice is for women who are about to have or have already undergone abdominal surgery and their families and carers.

Why have you been given this advice?

Following abdominal surgery it is good to know that there are measures you can take to help your wound heal and to prevent infection.

I am having planned surgery. What can I do to help prepare?

To aid recovery following abdominal surgery you can try to:

- Stop smoking
- Aim to become a healthy weight prior to your operation
- Make healthy changes to your diet and lifestyle.

Following your surgery:

Pain relief

It is normal to feel some pain following abdominal surgery. It is important to take the regular pain relief that your surgeon has prescribed for you. Keeping your pain at a comfortable level will allow you to mobilise earlier. Early mobilisation will help promote recovery.

Mobility

Early gentle movement following surgery will help improve blood flow to your wound. This helps ensure the area receives the oxygen and the nutrients it needs to heal. Movement and exercise also help prevent the risk of blood clots.

Hygiene

If you or your carer need to inspect your abdominal wound it is important to make sure your hands are really clean and that touching the wound is kept to a minimum. Shower or bath as normal after 48 hours. Try to avoid rubbing your wound. Pat it dry gently with a clean towel. Wear loose, comfortable, cotton clothing.

Nutrition

Having a healthy diet will help in two ways:

- Drinking enough fluids (about 8 glasses per day) and eating lots of fruit, vegetables and fibre can help avoid constipation, which will in turn prevent any unnecessary pressure on your wound
- Eating a wide and varied diet will help provide your body with the nutrients it needs to heal your wound.

Exercise

It is important to get enough sleep and rest to encourage healing. The physiotherapist will have visited you following your surgery to advise you about the exercises you can do to help strengthen your body. It is important to start and continue these exercises to ensure a fuller recovery.