

GENERAL AFTERCARE AT HOME

Elevation

If you have had surgery to your face or the chest area it is important that you try to elevate this area in the first couple of days as there is the tendency to swelling. This usually starts to subside and is often much better 3-4 days after surgery. For the face and chest this can be achieved by simply sleeping on an extra 1 or 2 pillows at night. For the upper limbs specific slings will usually be provided and for the legs elevating the end of the bed with a couple of books under the bed feet or sleeping with your leg on a pillow is effective. During the daytime it is important not to be on your feet for a long period of time if you have had trunk or leg surgery and when you rest to keep your feet elevated at least on a stool but ideally a little higher than this.

Wounds

Wounds may be of 3 different types as far as the aftercare is concerned.

1. Wounds may be left exposed with some ointment applied to the stitch line:

These wounds should be kept dry for at least 48 hours and are typically on the scalp or face. After this they can be gently cleaned with running water.

2. Wounds that have a dressing on in which the dressing is merely to provide a barrier and for comfort.

Mr Saeed usually allows this dressing to be removed at a week after surgery. Until this time, you should keep this wound dry and after this time the wound can be showered but you should avoid still water (i.e. lying in a bath) until 14 days.

3. The third type of wound is a wound in which the dressing is holding the stitches in place:

This type of wound is sometimes used on the face or other parts of the body and it is important you keep this dry until the wound has sufficient strength for the stitches to be removed or dissolved, depending on the type of stitches they are. This type of wound is usually kept covered and you should keep it dry for 10-14 days.

Mr Saeed will instruct you as to which type of wound you have and how it should be managed.

When your dressings are removed your wound will still be a little sensitive and is very likely to be red. Wounds in which absorbable sutures are used often look a little inflamed early on and this is usually the process which allows the stitches to dissolve. If your wound develops redness and swelling and tenderness beyond the actual incision, this may indicate infection and you should report this to Mr Saeed's team as soon as possible.

Following removal of sutures, it is important that you gently massage your wound to desensitise it and to allow the scars to settle. This process should in fact be carried out for 6-12 months to achieve optimum scar appearance and should also be carried out on a daily basis. Any moisturiser can be used but in the very early stages if there are any raw areas you will be supplied Sudocrem for this purpose. Wounds that are exposed to direct sunlight can become red and stay red for a long period of time or even permanently, it is important therefore that you avoid sun exposure either by covering the area or by applying a high factor anti UVA and UVB sunblock to the wound. Normally once the wound has healed there is no reason why you cannot go

swimming either in public baths or in the sea. It is best to avoid this however if there are any raw areas in your wound.

Preventing blood clots in the veins (deep venous thrombosis)

During your hospital stay Mr Saeed' and his Team take measures to protect you from clots forming in your leg veins that can be dangerous (or fatal) if they break off and reach the lungs. The risk for most patients lasts around 4 weeks after surgery and during this time you should continue with the measures that Mr Saeed recommends:

Keep mobile at all times, stretch your legs every 30-40 mins if relaxing.

Wear your TEDS (knee socks) as instructed unless you develop problems with them.

Keep hydrated.

Use the prescribed Clexane injections if Mr Saeed has put you on these and follow instructions with respect to any new bruising or bleeding that may develop.

Seek immediate help if you experience breathlessness, leg pain, cough, blood stained cough, dizziness, fainting, chest pain.

Activity

Whatever your surgery the tissues take some time to settle down afterwards. Wounds usually take 2 weeks to gain strength in the skin but internal tissues may take much longer and typically 4-8 weeks before they reach full strength.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are important following some types of surgery and if you are prescribed these please take them exactly as recommended. Please let Mr Saeed or any of his staff know if you have any allergies to antibiotics.

Painkillers

Strong painkillers are usually prescribed for the first 2-5 days following surgery and after this, simple painkillers such as paracetamol usually suffice. In the first day or so after surgery it is often better to take your painkillers regularly as prescribed as this will keep you more comfortable. After this time, you may decide to take your painkillers as required.

Do not take ibuprofen, naproxen, voltarol and other painkillers of these types until Mr Saeed instructs you it is safe to do so (they can cause bleeding). If you are prescribed these by your GP, let Mr Saeed know.

Aspirin is also in this family of medication and if it is prescribed by your GP / specialist let Mr Saeed know as you may need to continue it.

The above instructions provide a general guide only and Mr Saeed will go through any specific instructions for you at clinic. Always ask if you have any questions about any particular aspects of your care.

Smoking and /or non-prescribed medication, recreational drugs and supplements

These are directly harmful leading to complications eg smoking or have unknown effects that may be harmful to healing or your ability to look after yourself after surgery. It is vital that you avoid these.

Make-up, creams, tanning lotions and moisturisers

As a general rule avoid all of these near any surgical area for a week. Thereafter be aware that all these products can harbour bacteria, especially make-up and its application brushes etc. It is safest to use new products or products from dispensers. Ensure your hands are washed clean when touching surgical areas. Do not use shared products and please avoid Bio-Oil and arnica.

Follow up appointments

Please try to keep strictly to your follow up appointments as Mr Saeed uses these to check on your progress and to ensure that you are not getting stiff and your scars are not getting sensitive following your surgery. It is also a chance for you to ask questions and to assess how well your condition has responded to surgery. Please always let us know if you cannot make an appointment well in advance so that we can reschedule your appointment.

If you have any problems please contact the nurses at the hospital on:

The nurses have direct contact with Mr Saeed and can clarify things over the phone or make arrangements for you to be seen urgently if this is necessary.

AFTER ABDOMINOPLASTY (TUMMY TUCK)

Follow the general instructions and in addition:

WEEK 1

Keep your dressings dry.

You can carefully towel wash the rest of your body but no baths or pools until Mr Saeed advises.

Do not wear any bras or garments unless Mr Saeed has asked you to himself and has checked them.

Walk with a slight bend for the first 3-4 days gradually straightening out by day 7

Ensure that all body movements are gentle and slow. This is particularly important when getting up / out of chairs.

Do not over-exert as this can lead to excess swelling, bleeding or collections of fluid.

Do not drive.

WEEK 2 ONWARDS

Your dressings will have been removed and you can now shower or rinse with running water directly from the tap – do not fill the sink or use bowls for another week yet.

No baths or pools until Mr Saeed advises.

During week 2, apply Sudocrem to your wound after showering and also later if you have any raw areas along the wounds - apply a small amount of Sudocrem directly to the area after washing. Ensure that the tub is only for your use and that your hands are clean. This will usually heal such areas very quickly, at which point you should switch to simple moisturisers. Apply a small dressing to any raw areas after each shower until healed.

Waseem R Saeed BSc MB ChB FRCS(Plast)

Consultant Plastic Reconstructive and Hand Surgeon

At the start of week 3 switch to moisturiser and start your massages as instructed by Mr Saeed using simple moisturisers at least 2 times per day and continued for a minimum of 6 months

Light gym activity eg walking on a treadmill, can be commenced at the beginning of week 5. Heavier activity should be avoided until 6 weeks from the day of surgery and then built up slowly.

If you feel up to non-manual work you may re-start at 14 days after surgery, but heavy manual work / activity should be avoided until 6 weeks after your surgery and you should build this up slowly.

Driving in the first 2 weeks should be avoided and in the third to sixth weeks is permissible for **short essential** trips, if your recovery is straightforward, you have clear vision and normal mobility and you are not taking any medication that could affect your driving. After 6 weeks you may drive normally provided your vehicle has power-steering and the above conditions are met.

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