



## Patient Information

# Guidelines following Hand Surgery

We hope that your stay in our Day Surgery Unit has been comfortable and to your satisfaction. We hope that you have a speedy recovery and that the following instructions will be of help.

### **Mobilisation and elevation**

For the first two days it is very important that your hand is elevated, at least above your heart level, whenever it is still. This prevents or minimises the swelling (which could cause pain or stiffness). If the hand is painful it is most likely because it has been hanging down and has become swollen.

Fingers should be moved regularly, and the hand should be used. There is no need to use a sling or keep the hand still. Using the hand and moving the fingers will also minimise the swelling that occurs.

After the first two days the tendency for the hand to swell becomes less and elevation is therefore less important. Rapidly increasing the use of the hand should be possible, and once again will reduce the amount of pain and stiffness.

### **When should I remove the dressings?**

The dressing should be left untouched for approximately five days. Removal of the dressings can be arranged, via your Practice Nurse, or you may be asked to remove them yourself.

### **How should I remove the dressings?**

If you are asked to remove the dressings yourself, do so on a weekday so that you can contact the hospital or General Practitioner (GP) if there are any problems. Simply unwrap the bandages and the dressings should peel off easily. There will be some dried blood on the deeper layers. After the dressing is taken off the wounds can be left open. As long as it is healed and no ooze you can get the hand wet from then on.

Often there is quite a lot of bruising and tenderness around the scar, so you may wish to cover it and protect it for a few more days. You can use some of the dressings that were used to wrap the hand initially, as long as they are clean.

### **What types of stitches have been used?**

Dissolving stitches are usually used, although there are often knots on the surface.



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## **Do I need to remove the stitches?**

Two weeks after the operation and when you are washing you should pick the knots and scratch them. The stitches are very weak, they will break and the knots will fall off. If you have any concerns with the stitches please make an appointment with your GP Nurse.

It is sensible to do this because otherwise the remnants of the stitches may take up to four weeks to dissolve, and do occasionally cause a reaction in the tissues.

If non dissolving stitches have been used arrangements will be made for their removal. If you are unclear on which stitches you have please telephone the Day surgery Unit on 01793 604149, between 8.00am and 7.00pm.

**Stockings** - If you have been given support stockings to wear it is important that you continue to wear them, day and night, until you are fully mobile (at least 24-48 hours). The stockings should be removed for a short time daily to wash the feet and legs. You may also hand wash the stockings but do not dry them by direct heat (radiator or tumble dryer).

**Return to normal activity after anaesthetic** - Unless you have been given specific instructions, you should attempt to return to normal activities as soon as you feel able. This will be determined by the amount of swelling and discomfort in the hand.

**Follow up** – We will tell you about any follow up before you leave. If you need an outpatient appointment we will request one for you and the date and time will be sent to you by post.

## **What can I take for the pain?**

For any pain or discomfort after the operation, Paracetamol may be taken as per the instructions on the bottle/packet. Alternatively, the Day Surgery may provide you with pain relief.

## **You were given the following pain relief while in Day Surgery**

**Paracetamol at**

**Codeine at**

**Ibuprofen at**

## **Instructions for patients who have had a general anaesthetic.**

Anaesthetic drugs remain in the body for 24 hours and gradually wear off over this time.

During the 24 hours following your anaesthetic, you are under the influence of drugs and it is important to follow these instructions:

- Do not drive a car or any other vehicle, including a bicycle.
- Do not operate machinery or appliances such as cookers or kettles.



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- Do not drink any alcohol.
- Do not lock the bathroom or toilet door or make yourself inaccessible to the person looking after you.
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat a light diet, avoiding heavy or greasy foods.
- Take things easy for the day after your operation.
- Do not work with machinery or take strenuous exercise
- Do not make important decisions or sign important documents for 24 hours after your anaesthetic.

Some people take longer to recover from the effects of an anaesthetic so these guidelines may continue to be followed for up to 48 hours, if necessary.

**If there are any problems after you return home, please telephone your GP or out of hours GP service, or the Day Surgery Unit on 01793 604148 between 8.00am and 7.00pm, Monday to Fridays (excluding bank holidays). After 7.00pm or at weekends please contact the Surgical Assessment Unit on 01793 604039.**

If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our service, we would be happy to hear from you. Please write to:

Senior Sister  
Day Surgery Unit  
Great Western Hospital  
Marlborough Road  
Swindon  
SN3 6BB

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [gwh.pals@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.pals@nhs.net)**

#### Document Control

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