

Caring For Yourself After Anal Surgery

This leaflet is intended to supplement the advice given to you by your consultant and nurses about what to do after you have gone home.

This information is particularly relevant if you have undergone surgery for any of the following conditions

Anal skin tags, anal or perianal abscess, anal fistula or fistula-in-ano, excision of haemorrhoids, anal skin biopsies or after the removal of anal lesions.

Diet

It is important to eat and drink normally once you have gone home. You should maintain a balanced diet with plenty of fluids to keep the bowel movements soft. You should not miss meals to avoid having your bowels open.

Bowels

It is important to keep the bowels moving after anal surgery and to avoid straining. You can do this by keeping the stools soft (see diet above) but also your doctor may recommend a stool softener to take after you have gone home.

These measures should help to reduce the discomfort of bowel opening. The stool softener should be continued until you are comfortable.

Hygiene

It is important to keep the area clean. We recommend showering the area or using a bidet after opening your bowels. We suggest dabbing the area dry with a towel rather than rubbing. Some patients find using a warm hairdryer to dry off the skin in the area more comfortable.

Most patients are able to bath and shower normally. You should avoid perfumed soaps when washing.

In the early stages after the operation sitting in a warm bath with a tablespoon of salt in the bathwater (sitz bath) can be very soothing, particularly before any dressing changes.

Dressings

Sometimes after an abscess has been drained there is a deeper wound that will require packing (internal dressings). Normally it will be arranged for a district nurse to carry out these dressing changes. Most of the wounds around the anus are very shallow and don't need packing.

It is very difficult to get dressings to stick on wounds that are close to the anus. A piece of clean gauze tucked between the cheeks and a pad or panty liner will help soak up any moisture or discharge. These should be changed regularly.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it normal to get bleeding?

It is common after anal surgery because wounds are left to heal on their own and are not stitched. Patients often notice small amounts of blood when wiping, drying or when changing dressings. If bleeding seems to be excessive you should contact your doctor.

Is it normal to get a discharge?

Yes it is common to get some discharge when open wounds are healing. Small amounts should not be concerning. Wearing a small pad will protect your underwear. If the discharge increases and is associated with pain then you should contact your doctor.

How soon can I go back to work?

Most patients feel uncomfortable after anal surgery for a few days. Your consultant will indicate how much time you should have off. You will be advised to stay off longer if your job involves a lot of physical activity including lifting and bending. Sitting for prolonged periods may also be uncomfortable and it helps if you can move around.

How soon can I exercise?

Most patients feel uncomfortable after anal surgery for a few days. Normally we recommend that you don't undertake any strenuous physical activities for about two weeks. After that you should gradually increase your activities. If you develop local pain or discomfort you should stop what you are doing and rest. Your consultant will give you more information about specific physical activities should you request it.

When can I drive again?

Most patients are able to drive again within two weeks of their surgery and many within 48 hours. The timing depends on the local discomfort and the extent of the surgery undertaken. Your own consultant will be able to give you more specific instructions.

How soon can I go swimming?

We do not recommend that you go swimming in a public pool or one used by others until your wound have completely healed.

Is there anything else I should look out for?

If you develop any new or unexplained symptoms such as increasing pain or swelling in the area and this doesn't settle with simple painkillers you should contact your doctor. If you develop a fever or feel unwell with flu-like symptoms you should contact your doctor.