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**Ashford Hospital**  
London Road  
Ashford, Middlesex  
TW15 3AA  
Tel: **01784 884488**

**St. Peter's Hospital**  
Guildford Road  
Chertsey, Surrey  
KT16 0PZ.  
Tel: **01932 872000**

Website: [www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk](http://www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk)

# Caesarean Section Wound Infections

## Women's Health Department



## Introduction

At Ashford and St Peter's NHS Foundation Trust, we want to improve our detection and management of women who develop a wound infection following an elective caesarean section. By collecting information on how often infections happen, we are able to look at the reasons for the infection and make improvements to our care thereby reducing future chances of this happening.

This leaflet has been designed to explain what a surgical wound infection is and what to do if you suspect your wound has become infected. The chance of a caesarean section wound becoming infected is approximately six in every 100 women. It is one of the known complications of having a caesarean section operation.

We know that having a wound infection can mean:

- A longer stay in hospital if detected before initial discharge home
- Readmission to hospital from home in the postnatal period for treatment
- Is associated with increased pain post-operatively
- Affects mobility
- Disruption to caring for your newborn baby
- Can be distressing for you and your family

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### Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email [asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net](mailto:asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net). If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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**Author:** Dr Carr

**Department:** Women's Health and Paediatrics

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## **What information will we collect and pass onto the Surgical Site Infection Surveillance Service national programme?**

1. Your age and sex
2. The type of operation performed and details of its length and how it was done
3. Details of the infection, e.g. what type, what germs and how it was treated

We will not share any information that may be able to identify you personally, such as your name, address or postcode.

**Call the Pregnancy Advice Line if you feel unwell or have concerns with your wound after your elective caesarean section**

## **What are surgical wound infections and when do they develop?**

- Surgical wound infections are a result of harmful germs entering our body through the operation incision
- They can develop between two days and three weeks after an operation
- Most wound infections are limited to the skin but can extend deeper into the tissues underneath
- They rarely occur after the wound has visibly healed

## **How do we reduce the risk of infections?**

Before the operation:

- Swabs for MRSA (a germ that is resistant to common antibiotics) will be taken at the pre-operative assessment in Antenatal Clinic
- Women are advised to bathe or shower on the morning of the operation

During the operation:

- Antibiotics, which are not harmful to your baby and are safe for breastfeeding, are given in theatre
- Sterile surgical techniques including the use of sterile equipment

## What can be done to reduce the chance of infection?

- A waterproof surgical dressing is applied in theatre which should remain on the wound for five days
- Make sure hands are always visibly clean
- Daily showering is recommended so that the wound dressing is not fully immersed in water
- Avoid touching your wound once the dressing is removed until fully healed

## How we monitor your wound for signs of infection:

- Following the operation, and whilst in hospital, the midwives will check your heart rate and temperature
- Once home, the community midwife will inspect your wound at each visit
- Unless otherwise instructed, the wound dressing will be removed by the community midwife on day five
- Once the dressing has been removed the wound should be left exposed
- Some redness and swelling around the incision site is to be expected
- You will be contacted 30 days after the caesarean section and asked if you have had any problems with your wound – please let us know if you would prefer not to be contacted

## What signs should you look for?

- Skin around the wound is red, sore or feels hot and swollen
- The wound has a green or yellow colour discharge
- The wound becomes more painful each day following the operation
- You start to feel generally unwell, develop a temperature or feel feverish

## Who to contact if you think you have an infection:

- The Pregnancy Advice Line – **0300 123 5473**, should be your first port of call if you think you have a wound infection
- You may be advised to attend Maternity Triage on Labour Ward at St Peter's Hospital where you will be reviewed by a doctor

Please do not contact your community midwife

## Expected treatment if diagnosed with a wound infection

- A swab of the wound will be taken to check for germs
- Antibiotics will be prescribed, which can be taken at home
- If you are unwell or the infection is more severe, you may be readmitted to the postnatal ward for intravenous antibiotic treatment