Caesarean section wound care

The following advice will help you care for your wound following an emergency or elective caesarean section. If you need further advice, please speak to your doctor or midwife.

How big is a caesarean wound?
Your caesarean wound will be roughly 10 to 15cms long and situated horizontally on your lower abdomen, about where the top of your underwear would sit.

Will I have a dressing?
Your wound will be dressed in theatre using a large dressing which should remain on for 48 hours. Some patients may also need a pressure dressing which can be removed sooner. It is possible to have your wound glued which does not require a dressing however, this usually is at the surgeon’s discretion. You can shower with the normal dressing (this dressing is waterproof) or the glue once you are mobile enough to do so.

Will I have a scar?
All surgery carries a risk of scaring and it is likely that you will have a thin scar. At first the scar may appear pink or darker in colour but should fade in a few months. Some individuals may find their scar becomes raised and red. This is called a keloid scar and is more common in darker skin types. Keloid scaring can be difficult to treat but see your GP if you have any concerns.

How will my wound be managed in hospital?
Your midwife will assess your wound dressing daily on the postnatal ward and if you are still in hospital on day two then they can assist you to remove the dressing and check the wound below. If the dressing is soiled and needs changing earlier, your midwife will remove the dressing, clean the wound and reapply the dressing until it is suitable to remove it. You will be given analgesia for pain management in hospital but should ensure you have paracetamol and ibuprofen ready at home as well.

How do I care for my wound at home?
You should be able to manage your wound well at home. Always clean your hands with soap and water before touching your wound or the skin around it. We advise that you bathe and shower as normal but do not hold the shower directly over the wound or spend too long in the bath. Afterwards, you should dry the area completely by patting with a clean towel and avoid rubbing the area.
If your wound starts to bleed, apply gentle pressure for up to 15 minutes. If bleeding continues after this then seek medical advice from your GP or the maternity assessment line on 01223 217217.

Seek medical advice if you notice any signs of infection, such as:

- increased redness around the wound
- increased pain despite taking pain killers
- the wound and surrounding skin feels hot and starts to throb
- the wound is leaking fluid or blood
- the wound has an offensive smell
- you have a temperature or feel unwell

Please contact your GP or call the maternity assessment line out-of-hours as you may need antibiotics.

If you have a raised BMI and find that your wound is not easily accessible then please take care that the area is clean and dry at all times. Ensure that you can expose the area to the air at various points throughout the day. Wounds can take longer to heal and be more prone to infection if they are not kept clean, dry and allowed to air.

If you are a smoker or have diabetes please be aware your wound may take longer to heal. You should also follow the advice above.

**Do my stitches need removing?**

Your stitches are dissolvable but you may notice knots at the edge of the wound. Some patients may need staples to close their wound and half of these will be removed on day seven and the rest on day nine to ten.

**When can I resume normal activities?**

You should avoid swimming or strenuous exercise until the skin has healed together completely. Since you have had major abdominal surgery it is recommended you do not resume fitness training, heavy lifting or activities which would risk pulling or stretching your scar for six weeks or until you feel ready. You should also avoid driving for six weeks or until you feel able to complete an emergency stop safely.

**References**

http://merlin/Pages/Results.aspx?k=ALL%28wound%20care%29&r=&start1=26
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Document history
Authors Isobel Macgregor
Pharmacist N/A
Department Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk
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