



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Spinal surgery aftercare

Neurology

Patient information

## What is this information about?

This information is about how you can care for yourself after your spinal operation and what follow up care you will get from us.

It includes information about:

- How you should walk and move around after your surgery (your mobility).
- How you can safely build up to doing the exercise and activities you did before your operation as far as possible.
- How you should look after your operation wound.
- What symptoms mean you should seek help from your GP.
- How to manage any pain that you have from your operation.
- Your follow up appointment.
- How you can book any further imaging scans (such as MRI or CT scans) that you need.

## Why have I been given this information?

You have been given this information because you have had an operation on your spine. Following the advice in this information can help you to recover from your operation as much and as quickly as possible. It will also help to keep you safe while you recover.

## How should I build up my mobility and activity levels after I am discharged (go home) from hospital?

**For the first six to eight weeks after your operation:**

- Slowly build up your levels of activity.
- Try walking to start with and increase this as you feel able.
- Avoid heavy lifting or activities that mean you have to twist or bend your back.

After eight weeks you can start to do 'low impact' exercises. Low impact exercises do not put a lot of strain and weight through your muscles and joints. They include things such as swimming or using an exercise (static) bike.

Be aware of how your body feels when you are doing exercise or activities. Avoid doing things which cause pain or discomfort or feel 'too much' for your body to cope with.

## How should I care for my wound?

- Before you go home from hospital a member of the team looking after you should tell you what has been used to close your wound and when this should be removed. You may have stitches, staples (clips) or a closure under your skin.

If you have not been told what has been used to close your wound **do** ask a nurse or doctor looking after you to tell you.

If you have staples or stitches (sutures) a nurse at your GP surgery can remove them. Call your surgery to make an appointment

to have this done. Do this far enough in advance to get an appointment for the date that you have been told your stitches should come out.

- Keep your wound clean and dry. If you shower or your dressing gets wet in another way **do**:
  - Take the damp dressing off.
  - Dry the wound with a clean towel.
  - Put on a new dressing.

### **Be aware**

24 hours after you have had your stitches or clips removed you no longer need a dressing over your wound and you can shower normally.

## **What symptoms might mean that I have a wound infection and what should I do if I have them?**

### **Warning signs that you may have a wound infection:**

- Being red (this may appear different on black or brown skin), inflamed (swollen) or hot to touch.
- Oozing or discharging any fluid.
- Opening up.

You could also have an infection if your wound looks ok, but you have a high temperature (fever) that does not go away or you feel unwell.

If you have any of these symptoms do seek help from your GP surgery or NHS 111 online (111.nhs.uk or phone 111) straight away.

# How can I manage any pain that I have after my operation?

We will give you pain killers (pain relief medicine) to take home with you when you leave hospital. This will be like the pain relief medicine you had in hospital.

Over the next few weeks, as your pain becomes less, you should be able to take the medicine less often or in smaller doses (wean down from the medicine). It can help to make a note of what pain relief you are taking and when.

## Be aware

**Do not** wean down any neuropathic pain (nerve pain) relief such as gabapentin, amitriptyline or pregabalin without talking with your GP about this first. This is most important if you had been taking this medicine for a long time before your operation.

If you are running low or have run out of any medicine, ask your GP surgery for a repeat prescription. Your GP will have your hospital discharge summary. This tells them about your stay in hospital including what treatment you had, how it went and how you were. It includes the medicines you were given to take at home.

## How can I get a sick note (fit note)?

If you need a sick note, please ask the hospital doctors before you are discharged. Once this has expired, if you need more time off work please ask your GP for a new note.

## **Will I have a further appointment (follow up appointment) after I have been discharged from hospital?**

Yes. You will be sent details of your appointment in the post. Your appointment may be in several months as the clinics are very busy.

### **If you:**

- Are concerned.
- Have missed your appointment.
- Have not been sent an appointment.

Please contact booking line. Phone: **0300 303 8360**.

## **How can I book an MRI or CT imaging scan appointment if I am told I need to?**

Please call the imaging booking line. Phone: **01273 523040**.

### **Be aware**

Do not book an imaging appointment unless a member of your consultant's team has told you that you should.

## How can I get a copy of any of my images?

If you would like copies of any of your images, please e-mail [uhsussex.radiologyimageaccess@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.radiologyimageaccess@nhs.net)

### Please tell us:

- Which images you would like.
- Your name.
- Your date of birth.
- Your hospital number.
- A contact telephone number.

## Who can I contact if I need further information or support after I have read this information?

If you have any non-urgent questions, please e-mail the spinal practitioner team: Email [uhsussex.spinalpractitioners@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.spinalpractitioners@nhs.net)

This service is staffed Monday to Thursday from 9am to 5pm.  
It may take us a couple of days to respond.

This information is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath.

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