

Fact sheet: Gynaecological Oncology Unit

Post-operative discharge from hospital after vulval surgery

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Day of discharge

Before you leave the ward, please ensure that you have collected:

- all of your belongings from your room, including phone chargers;
- any x-rays or scans that you brought into hospital with you;
- any medications that you brought into hospital with you;
- any new medications prescribed during your stay;
- a medical certificate (if you need one);
- your follow-up appointment; and/or
- the discharge letter for your local doctor.

Future plans

If you are unsure about the need for further treatment and whether this has been planned for you, please don't hesitate to ask one of the medical or nursing staff.



What to expect in the next few weeks

- Recovery from your operation should take 4 to 6 weeks, depending upon the extent of your surgery. You do not have to stay at home and may go out as you wish.
- You might be tired for the next 7 to 10 days and this is normal. You should not stay in bed, but get up and get dressed and go out for a short walk once or twice a day, aiming to increase the distance each day.
- Your vulva can become quite swollen after surgery. An ice pack (gel pack or a pack of frozen peas or ice cubes in a plastic bag) might provide relief.
- You might find it uncomfortable to sit upright in a chair – an air ring or foam cushion can make sitting more comfortable.
- If you have been discharged from hospital with a drain in your groin wound, a community nurse will monitor the amount of drainage coming from the wound. The drain will be removed once there is less than 50mls per day draining from the wound.
- If you have been prescribed blood thinning injections, you should continue taking them daily for the recommended duration (usually 28 days).

Emotions

- You might occasionally find that you are tearful and emotional. This is a normal reaction and will gradually lessen.
- If you find this to be an ongoing problem, please let us know as we are able to offer formal psychological support and counselling.

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Eating and drinking

- You may resume your normal diet. Your appetite should return to normal over the next few weeks.
- There are no dietary restrictions. You may drink alcohol if you wish.

Bowels

- It can take several weeks for your bowels to return to normal. It is important to avoid becoming constipated. Ensure that you drink plenty of fluids and that you eat fruit and vegetables every day.
- You will probably need to take a laxative to relieve constipation. Your doctor or local pharmacist will advise which laxatives are suitable for your situation.

Activity and exercise

- Space your activities throughout the day and gradually increase them as you feel able.
- Your wounds will take several weeks to heal completely and you should avoid activities that can strain your wounds during this time:
 - avoid heavy lifting, stretching or strenuous activity (such as heavy housework, carrying bags of shopping, pushing a supermarket trolley) for the next 6 weeks.
 - avoid high impact exercise for 6 weeks. Stop if it is uncomfortable or if it hurts.
- You may drive a car in 4 weeks' time, providing that you are able to do an 'emergency stop'. You need to check if your insurance company has any further restrictions.
- You may resume sexual intercourse after 6 weeks if you feel comfortable to do so.

Caring for your wound

- You have dissolving stitches in your vulval wound. The wound will take a few weeks to heal completely. It is important to keep the area clean and dry until it has completely healed. You should wash the area with warm tap water each time you pass urine or open your bowels, then dry with a hairdryer on the 'cool' or 'medium' setting or pat dry with a clean towel.
- You may shower as usual. If you have a groin wound, you should not have a bath until the wound has completely healed.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can slow down wound healing and can lead to chest infection after surgery.

Please see your GP or attend the nearest Emergency Department if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- a temperature of more than 38°C;
- an increase in bleeding or discharge from any wound;
- your wound becomes hot, red, painful or smelly;
- burning or stinging when passing urine;
- a sudden onset of pain that is not relieved by pain medication;
- redness, pain or swelling in one or both legs;
- difficulty breathing or feeling faint; and/or
- pain in your lungs or chest.

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OUR CONTACT DETAILS

Monday to Friday, 9am - 4pm

Tish Lancaster: 8890-5555; pager 08503

or

Department of Gynaecological
Oncology admin office: 8890-6801

(the doctor will return your call
when they are available)

After hours and weekends-

Ring the hospital switchboard on
8890-5555. Ask the operator to page
the Gynaecology Registrar or
on-call Fellow.

or

Attend the Emergency Department of
your nearest hospital.

We welcome further feedback on this brochure
as a way of continually improving our service.

Send your feedback to:

WSLHD-Get_Involved@health.nsw.gov.au