

POST OPERATIVE CARE GUIDE

(Gynaecology)



Hello!

Welcome to our practical guide to post-op care in the Highlands.

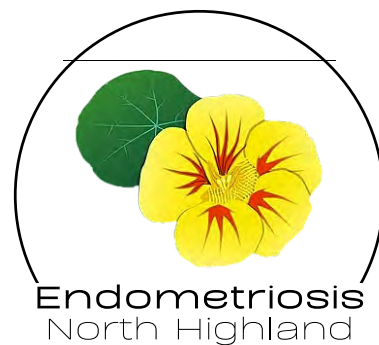
This information pack is designed and produced by the North Highland Women's Wellbeing Group, a not-for-profit organisation run by three ladies with complex Gynae conditions. The information is vetted by NHS Highland's Gynaecology team.

After any procedure, life feels a bit upside down for a while and it's handy to have all the basic useful info in one place. We're hoping that this guide helps with that.

Please remember that you are not alone. NHWWH is proud to run four peer support groups across the Highlands. These are free, confidential and there's the option to post anonymously if you feel that would suit you best.



[Menopause Group Link](#)



[Endometriosis Group Link](#)



[Women's Health Group Link](#)



[Period Health Group Link](#)

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Badenoch and Strathspey Hospital Aviemore	<u>01479 883 111</u>
Belford Hospital Fort William	<u>01397 702 481</u>
Broadford Hospital Skye	<u>01471 822 491</u>
Caithness General Hospital	<u>01955 605 050</u>
Campbeltown Hospital	<u>01586 552 224</u>
County Community Hospital Invergordon	<u>01349 852 496</u>
Cowal Community Hospital Dunoon	<u>01369 708 365</u>
Dunbar Hospital Thurso	<u>01847 893 263</u>
Islay Hospital	<u>01496 301 000</u>
Lawson Memorial Hospital Golspie	<u>01408 633 157</u>
Lorn and Islands Hospital	<u>01631 567 500</u>
Migdale Hospital Bonar Bridge	<u>01863 766 211</u>
Mull and Iona Community Hospital	<u>01680 300 392</u>
Nairn Town and County Hospital	<u>01667 452 101</u>
New Craigs Hospital	<u>01463 704 000</u>
Portree Community Hospital	<u>01478 613 200</u>
Raigmore Hospital	<u>01463 704 000</u>
Ross Memorial Hospital Dingwall	<u>01349 863 313</u>
Victoria Hospital Rothesay	<u>01700 501 536</u>



Access medical advice
24 hours a day, 7 days a
week including holidays.

Call **111**

[Search for your local
GP contact details here](#)

GET THE RIGHT CARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE



- Suspected heart attack or stroke
- Breathing difficulties
- Severe bleeding

A&E or 999



- Colds
- Cold Sores
- Sore Throat
- Diarrhoea or Constipation
- Indigestion
- Aches and Pains
- Help if you run out of your repeat prescription

Pharmacist



- A range of clinicians, including doctors, nurses and sometimes pharmacists and physiotherapists to help you with both mental and physical health issues.

GP Practice Team



- NHS Inform includes self-help guides for a range of common conditions: [NHSinform.scot/self-help-guides](https://www.nhs.uk/infomanagement/self-help-guides). If you think you need A&E, but it's not life threatening, call NHS 24 on 111. If you need same day medical attention that cannot wait for your GP Practice to reopen, call NHS 24 on 111.

NHS 24



- Call NHS 24 on 111, 24/7, 365 days a year
- Cuts and minor burns
 - Sprains and strains
 - Suspected broken bones and fractures

Minor Injuries Unit



- Contact your GP Practice
- Call NHS 24 on 111, 24/7, 365 days a year
- Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87
- Weekdays: Monday - Thursday 6pm to 2am
- Weekend: Friday 6pm - Monday 6am

Mental Wellbeing



- Tooth Pain
- Swelling to your mouth
- Injury in your mouth
- Painful or bleeding gums
- Advice on oral hygiene

Dentist



- Red or sticky eye
- Pain in or around your eye
- Blurred or reduced vision
- Flashes and Floaters

Optometrist

If you are unsure about where to go or who to see, find out at:
[NHSinform.scot/right-care-right-place](https://www.nhs.uk/infomanagement/self-help-guides)

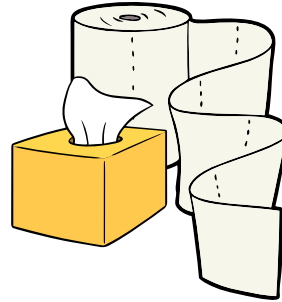
BATHING POST-OP



You should be able to take a shower and remove any dressings 24 hours after your operation.



It's advised to have someone around in case you need help getting in or out of the shower. Especially if you're feeling weak or dizzy



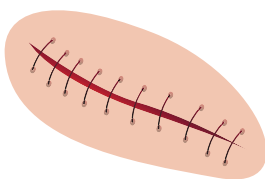
Pat wounds dry with clean disposable tissues or let them dry in the air. Keeping scars clean and dry helps healing.



Scars can get wet, but shouldn't be soaked (eg. in bathwater), especially if they are dissolvable stitches. You can take long baths again when the stitches are completely gone and your wounds are healed.

SIGNS OF INFECTION

(If you spot any of these signs please call your local nurse, GP or speak to a pharmacist)



Swollen areas around scars



Yellow, white, grey or green discharge.



Redness around the scar site or muscles nearby



Heat around the scar or scar area



Fever and/or feeling unwell



Unpleasant smell coming from wound area

DEALING WITH POST-OP GAS PAINS

During your operation, you may have had some carbon dioxide gas popped into your abdomen for the surgeon to see clearer.

In the first few days of recovery, this gas can take a while to work its way out of your system. It can cause nasty pains in your shoulders, neck & around your bra line but there are some things which help to reduce it and keep you more comfortable.



Peppermint Tea

Mints (Polo's, Poppets, Mint Imperials etc...)

Sleeping propped up against some pillows

Heat pads

Hot water bottles (with a cover on to avoid burns)

Gentle movement every 30 minutes to keep circulation going

Gentle rotation of the shoulders

Soft massage around the neck & shoulders

LEARN ABOUT SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

This is just a quick guide, so we can't go in depth about each condition here but luckily the amazing team at NHS Inform have done just that for us. Click on the link's below to learn more.

[Endometriosis](#)

[Fibroids](#)

[Adenomyosis](#)

[PCOS](#)

[Pelvic Inflammatory Disease](#)

[Period Health](#)

[Menopause](#)

[Early Menopause](#)

[Ovarian Cysts](#)

[Pelvic Organ Prolapse](#)

[Urinary Tract Infection \(UTI\)](#)

[Urinary Incontinence](#)

[Bowel Incontinence](#)

[Lipoedema](#)

[Premenstrual Syndrome \(PMS\) and](#)

[Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder \(PMDD\)](#)

[Irritable Bowel Syndrome \(IBS\)](#)

[Chronic Pain](#)

[Vaginal Discharge](#)

[Genital Symptoms](#)

[Check out our easy printable resources on our website here](#)

MOVING FORWARDS

Driving

Each car insurance company has its own rules and regulations on how long you should wait to drive after an anesthetic.



You should not drive for at least 24-48 hours after your anesthetic as your reaction times are dulled until it wears off.

Essentially only start driving when you're insurance will cover you and you feel well enough in yourself to do so.

It is a good idea to practice with no keys in the ignition. Try and see if you can do the movements you would need for an emergency stop and a 3 point turn without causing yourself any discomfort or pain.

Travelling Home

Please **don't** travel without a seatbelt. Although they can be uncomfortable after a procedure, they are vital and legal to wear.

To keep your wounds comfortable and safe, you can bring a thin blanket to place over your stomach to disperse the pressure from the seatbelt across you.

You can also use a thin pillow to sit on during your journey.

Leave enough time to stop regularly (every 30 - 60 minutes) and stretch your legs to avoid getting cramp and to keep your blood moving.

Wear something super comfortable to travel in. Loose, cotton or breathable clothing such as pajamas or lounge wear are perfect.

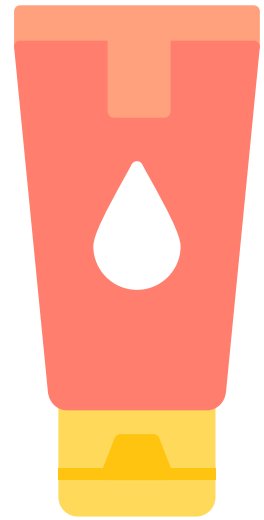
It's important that you have someone with you for the first 24 hours after a procedure.

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

You can start to have penetrative sex 6 weeks after abdominal/vaginal surgery **providing you have no pain, vaginal bleeding or any unusual vaginal discharge.**

When you start to have intercourse use extra lubrication (you can get this at the chemist or the supermarket)

If it is uncomfortable, wait a week and try again. If it doesn't get better then contact your GP or Nurse Practitioner. Don't be embarrassed, they would rather see you than you continue to be uncomfortable!

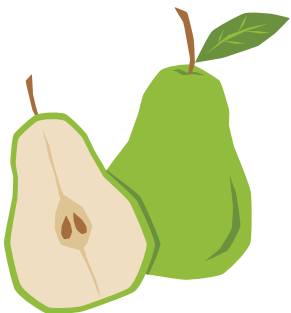


BOWEL MOVEMENTS

Bowel habits may change after surgery, so please make sure that initially you eat small frequent meals .

If your bowels don't move for more than 2 days, then taking a laxative is advised and try not to strain when on the toilet. You can get this from the pharmacist or from your GP surgery.

Here's some low cost, easy ways to help get things moving again after your procedure...



Ripe pears are not just delicious but full of fibre

A small step to rest your feet on when you go to the loo can help reduce pressure on the bowel & make going to the loo easier



Sip warm water often throughout the day. Dehydration causes constipation so keep yourself hydrated!

Keep moving! Not busting moves on the dance floor, but gentle movement, little and often



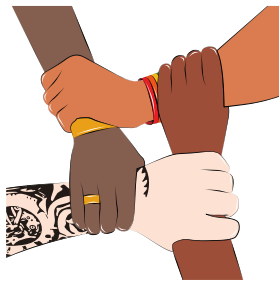
Tea and coffee in small amounts can help constipation. Stick to max 2 cups a day for a while, to let your bowel recover

TIREDNESS & REST

Both being in pain and having any form of anesthesia can make you extremely tired.

Feeling tired or fatigued is not a weakness so be kind to yourself. Your body has been through a lot and it's normal to feel physically and even mentally weaker.

There are things you can do to improve this but we know first hand they are easier said than done. Life is busy and resting is not always easy. Here's a few ways to help yourself recover in your own time...



Don't be afraid to ask for help



Sleep when your body tells you to, even if it's during the day



Your body has been through a lot, be kind to yourself



Delegate jobs, chores & shopping to friends and family. They often want to help, so let them until you feel well enough to take it on yourself again.



Procedures, hospital visits, diagnoses and pain can all take their toll on our mental health. Remember there are lots of groups, organisations & people who understand and you can lean on



Take your time and be patient. Build up how much you do day-by-day and don't try to rush back to your normal pace too quickly.

[find out more](#)

REDUCING THE RISK OF BLOOD CLOTS

After a procedure there is a small risk of blood clots forming in the veins in your legs and pelvis which is known as a Deep Vein Thrombosis, or DVT. You can reduce the risk of clots by:

Be as mobile as you can as early as you can after your operation

You may be given compression stockings to wear at home

Your doctor may give you a blood thinner injection before you leave but not everyone needs this

Gentle exercises you can do while resting

- 1 Move each foot in a circular motion for 30 seconds
- 2 Pump each foot up and down briskly for 30 seconds.
- 3 Move each foot in a circular motion or 30 seconds
- 4 Bend and straighten your leg one at a time. Repeat 3 times for each leg.



Stay hydrated during your recovery. Surgery and the heat of being in hospital can be very dehydrating and it's important to drink enough after. This helps keep DTV risk down and helps your whole digestive system after a procedure.



HOW TO ACCESS YOUR SURGERY RESULTS



When you come back from recovery your doctor will visit you in the ward to explain how your procedure went. It can be hard to remember what they say, especially if you're still drowsy or sleepy.

In a few weeks your doctor will write a letter to your GP and you should get a copy in the post too. This letter should explain what they found during the procedure. If you don't get this letter you can call your GP surgery and ask for it



Most doctors will arrange a follow up appointment for around 6 to 8 weeks after a procedure. This is your opportunity to discuss the results, ask any questions and work on a care plan together.

Medical language can be confusing and there may be words you are seeing for the first time.

You can find an easy guide of how to read your medical letters from your doctors below

[Check out our guide here](#)



FEEDING BACK YOUR EXPERIENCE

Services are constantly changing and for these changes to be as beneficial as possible, it helps for decision makers to hear your experiences, both positive and negative.

There are several ways you can do this.

NHS Highland Patient Feedback Team

We would always encourage you to talk to staff but we understand that not everyone finds this easy. We would like to hear and understand your comments, opinions, concerns or suggestions.



www.careopinion.org.uk

Care opinion listen to what people and their families have to say and are responding and showing where they are making improvements as a result.



www.pass-scotland.org.uk

Supporting anyone who uses the NHS to understand their rights and responsibilities as a patient in Scotland, raise concerns, give feedback or comments, or make a complaint about NHS treatment in Scotland.



Sources

Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
NHS Inform
NHS UK
www.northhighlandwwh.co.uk



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December 2023



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[Endometriosis Group Link](#)



[Period Health Group Link](#)



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