

# Going home after abdominal surgery: advice from the neonatal unit

## Information for parents and carers

This information sheet answers some of the questions you may have when your baby is being discharged from the neonatal unit, after having abdominal surgery. It explains how to manage pain, how to care for the surgical wound and when and how to seek for urgent medical care. If you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the doctors or nurses caring for your child.

### How to manage pain at home after surgery

Your child may be uncomfortable and in pain for some days after the operation. Paracetamol may be prescribed to control the pain and should be given as prescribed in the separate discharge summary, as doses will be adjusted for your child's weight and age.

**Do not** give your child more than the stated doses and seek medical advice if pain is not well controlled with the prescribed medication. Please note that ibuprofen **is not** licensed for use in babies during the first month of life.

### How to care for the surgical wound

Your child had a surgical cut made in the skin that may have been closed with stitches that are usually dissolvable. Some of these stitches can take several months to completely dissolve and you don't need to do anything about them.

Your child's wound may need to be covered with a dressing. The paediatric surgical team will advise you when and how to remove or change the dressing.

The wound area may become bruised for a few days after the operation and some swelling is expected. Please look at the area around your child's wound daily or as advised by the paediatric surgeons.

Do not get the wound under water, for example in a bath, until it has completely healed or until your doctor says it is safe to do so. Keep the wound clean and dry following the advice from your child's doctor.

### How to seek further medical advice

Please go to the outpatient follow-up appointments as advised by the paediatric surgeons and/or neonatal doctors. If you need medical help or advice about your baby's health that can't

wait until the appointment **but** it is not an emergency, please contact your GP or phone the NHS 111 service.

**Seek immediate medical advice by contacting the nearest Emergency Department or call 999 if your baby has the following symptoms:**

- irregular breathing pattern or difficulty in breathing
- frequent vomiting or refusing to feed
- vomiting green bile or blood
- swollen tummy
- wound that is swollen, red or discoloured and/or hot to touch, oozes pus or clear fluid or bleeds, has offensive smell or odour
- blood in poo
- increased pain that does not improve with the painkiller medication prescribed
- high temperature (more than 38 degrees Celsius) with cold to touch hands and/or feet, as this may indicate an infection that needs urgent treatment.
- low temperature (less than 36.5 degrees Celsius)
- change to colour of your child's usual skin tone, for example, pale, red, discoloured, mottled or blueness, to the lips, nose, fingers, toes or general body
- severe tiredness or sleepiness, unresponsiveness or floppy child
- very unsettled or irritable
- abnormal movements or fits

**Please note:** on brown and black skin changes in colour may be harder to see, so particularly close monitoring is recommended.

### **Important information**

- Read the separate discharge summary provided to you carefully.
- Please attend your child's neonatal and surgical follow-up on time.
- Seek urgent advice if you have any concerns.
- The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: 020 3299 4618

Email: [kings.pals@nhs.net](mailto:kings.pals@nhs.net)

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email [kings.access@nhs.net](mailto:kings.access@nhs.net)**