

# Discharge advice following aortic stent graft repair (EVAR)

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## Information for patients from the Vascular Surgery Service

This leaflet is not meant to replace the information discussed between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion or as a useful reminder of the key points.

Your surgery was necessary to repair the stretched artery (aneurysm) in your abdomen. This leaflet gives some specific instructions and explains some possible difficulties that you may experience over the next few months. It is also designed to reassure you that these are often quite normal following the major surgery that you have undergone.

### How do I take care of my wounds?

You will be discharged with a dressing over the groin wounds which are closed with buried, dissolvable stitches which do not need to be removed. Until your wounds are healed, change the dressing(s) if they become soiled, wet, or loose. Healing is usually complete within a week or so. Once healed, apply moisturiser around your wounds for two weeks.

It is important to keep your groin wounds clean as these can become infected. This can be done either by a bath or shower and patting the wounds dry with a clean towel. The wounds may also fill with lymph, a colourless fluid that may weep from the wound or collect underneath causing a swelling; this will eventually dry up but it may take some time. If this happens and your wound becomes red, you should seek advice from your GP who will arrange for the district nurse to dress your wound for you until it dries up.

You may also be treated with antibiotics during this period.

It is normal to have some bruising around your groin wounds which will gradually fade. If these become swollen and tender to the touch, you should seek advice from your GP as they may need to be treated with antibiotics. You may also feel areas of numbness and twinges of pain in and around the wounds, this is quite normal and is due to the cut nerves in your skin wounds and will fade in time.



### **When can I resume my normal activities?**

A period of convalescence is suggested after leaving hospital; this time is spent resting more than usual. The procedure that you underwent was not as invasive as the open surgical repair but it has still put your body under a degree of stress.

After this convalescence period you can gradually return to normal activities, taking care not to put too much strain on the wound in either groin. Within the first two weeks you should not carry anything heavier than a dinner tray. More strenuous activities such as digging the garden and DIY should be avoided until you are fully comfortable and then should be started gradually.

### **When can I start exercising again?**

It is advisable to gradually increase the amount of exercise that you undertake, lengthening the distances that you walk. Mobility is dictated by any pain that you may experience in your groin wounds and by other conditions, such as arthritis, and will therefore vary from patient to patient. We would aim for you to return to your normal level of activity about a month after your operation.

### **When can I start driving again?**

You will be fit enough to start driving when you are able to perform an emergency stop comfortably; this is usually two weeks or more after your operation. Driving too soon after an operation such as this may affect your insurance. If you are in any doubt about restarting driving please speak to your GP or the vascular team when you come to the outpatient clinic, which is normally six weeks after your discharge from hospital. We also advise that you check your insurance policy details or to contact your insurance company.

### **When can I return to work?**

If applicable, you will be fit enough to return to work within one to three months following your operation depending on your occupation. Your vascular consultant, or one of their team, will be able to advise you about this when you return for your follow-up clinic appointment.

### **Will I be given medication to take home?**

You should continue to take your usual medications as before your operation. You will be discharged home on aspirin or clopidogrel and a statin (a drug used to reduce your blood cholesterol level).

### **Should I try to stop smoking?**

If you are a smoker you must do your best to stop. Continuing to smoke will cause further damage to your arteries and your graft is more likely to stop working.

### **Will I need a follow-up appointment?**

The vascular team may telephone or review you as an outpatient if they need to check on your progress after discharge. Outpatients visits are not always needed if you are well. If you do have any concerns, please telephone the vascular team on the numbers on the following page.

### What do I do if I feel unwell at home?

If you develop any problems relating to your surgery, such as new pain or swelling in your wound as mentioned in the wound section of this leaflet, then please contact the vascular service using the contact numbers below.

If you get sudden severe pain or numbness in your leg which does not get better within two hours, please attend the Urgent Care Centre at Kent and Canterbury Hospital (K&C) immediately.

If you experience any new swelling in your ankles, shortness of breath, or chest pain, you must seek medical attention at your local accident and emergency (A&E) department as you may have a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolus (PE)).

If you develop any health problem unrelated to your surgery, such as a chest infection, and it is within normal working hours, contact your GP surgery for advice. If it is outside surgery hours, contact your local out-of-hours doctors' service (the number is available from your GPs' answerphone message).

### Useful numbers and contacts

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the following: during the working day, first try the vascular nurse or, if unable to get through or out of hours ask the hospital switchboard for the vascular registrar on call.

- Vascular Nurse Practitioners, K&C  
Telephone: 01227 864137 (in working hours)  
Email: [ekh-tr.vascular-nurse@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.vascular-nurse@nhs.net)
- Kent and Canterbury Hospital (K&C)  
Telephone: 01227 766877  
(out of hours for Registrar on call)
- Kent (Vascular) Ward, K&C  
Telephone: 01227 783102

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145 or 01227 864314, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site [www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation)