Useful contacts for further information

**CORE** is a charity offering information on digestive disorders and bowel problems, such as Crohn’s disease and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

- **t:** 020 7486 0341
- **e:** info@corecharity.org.uk or visit
- **w:** www.digestivedisorders.org.uk

**Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

- **t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**
To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust’s services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

- **t:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas’
- **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy’s
- **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

**Language Support Services**
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

- **t:** 020 7188 8815
- **fax:** 020 7188 5953

**NHS Choices**
Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

- **w:** www.nhs.uk

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We hope you find the information contained in this leaflet helpful in the days and weeks after your operation. It contains the answers to some frequently asked questions on how to look after your wound following your operation.

**Leaving hospital**

If you have had your operation in the day surgery unit (DSU), you will be able to leave hospital on the same day as your operation. It is important that you rest for the remainder of the day. You will need a friend or family member to travel home and stay with you for at least 24 hours after your surgery. You should have received the information leaflet, *Surgical Admissions Lounges and Day Surgery Units at Guy’s and St Thomas’ hospitals*, if not please ask for a copy.

If you need to stay in hospital following your operation, you will receive the leaflet, *Preparing for your stay at Guy’s and St Thomas’ hospitals*, which provides advice on how to prepare for an overnight stay in hospital. In this situation, your doctor or nurse will tell you when you will be able to leave hospital.

**Will I have a dressing?**

You will have a dressing over the wound and should remove this in the bath the day after your surgery. You may need to give it a gentle pull to take it off. It is possible that your wound will bleed when you do this, so do not be alarmed if this happens. If you are concerned about the amount of bleeding, please do not hesitate to contact us. Contact details can be found at the end of this leaflet.

If you feel generally unwell or experience a fever (temperature), you should see your GP or local A&E department. Your follow up appointment can also be brought forward if necessary.

**Notes**
You should not go swimming until your wound has healed. However, you can have sex as soon as you feel comfortable.

**Will my peri anal abscess return?**

Abscesses can return and this is why it is important that you attend your follow-up appointment. At this appointment the specialist will check that you do not have a fistula and will give you further advice on preventing further abscesses developing.

You will receive a follow-up appointment for about eight weeks after your surgery. This is just a check up to make sure everything has healed. If you have not been given an appointment in the peri anal clinic on a Tuesday morning, please call the clinic clerks on 020 7188 6208.

**Who should I contact if I have a problem or any questions or concerns?**

You can contact Fiona Hibberts (consultant nurse – colorectal) on 020 7188 2568, or her secretary on 020 7188 6475. Alternatively, you can email Fiona at: fiona.hibberts@gstt.nhs.uk

If you experience persistent bleeding from your wound, you can contact the ward or department where you were treated by calling the switchboard on 020 7188 7188 and asking for the relevant ward. Out of hours, you should contact your GP or local accident and emergency (A&E) department.

Your surgeon may ask you to ‘digitate’ your wound each day. This involves running a finger along your wound, to prevent the top layer of skin from healing too quickly. This may be uncomfortable, but can help to prevent your abscess from recurring or developing into a fistula (tunnel from your anus to the skin). If you do not wish to do this yourself or you cannot reach the area, you will need to arrange for your practice nurse to do this for you each day. You may also need your wound re-dressed by your practice nurse.

**Specific instructions for me:**

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Will I have any pain?
As with all surgery, you should expect some discomfort. It can be quite painful for the first couple of days and it may seem like it gets worse before it starts to feel more comfortable again, but the pain will ease. When you leave the ward or DSU we may give you:

- **Painkillers.** We may give you some painkillers to take home with you. It is important that you take your prescribed painkillers regularly to keep you as comfortable as possible. However, the tablets are not compulsory and if you have little pain you may not need to take them. Always follow the instructions on the packet and never take more than the recommended dose.

- **Antibiotics.** We may give you a course of antibiotics to take to prevent infection and reduce your pain. If we give you a type of antibiotics called metronidazole, you must not drink alcohol while you are taking the tablets or for 48 hours after completion of the course. Mixed with alcohol, these tablets can cause unpleasant reactions such as nausea, vomiting, flushing of the face, headache or palpitations. You can safely drink alcohol again 48 hours after this treatment is over. Always complete the prescribed course of any antibiotics. Please make sure that you have told the doctor if you are allergic to any antibiotics and always ask if you are unsure about any of your medicines.

- **Laxatives.** These medicines will encourage bowel movement and help to keep your stool soft after the operation. You may not need to take laxatives after your operation - your surgeon will decide what is appropriate for you.

What should I expect when I go to the toilet?
You may have some discomfort and a little bleeding the first time you open your bowels. However, you should open them normally after the operation when you get the urge to do so. It is a good idea to take a dose of your painkillers about 15–20 minutes before you open your bowels, to reduce the discomfort.

Keeping the wound site clean
It is important to keep the area of the operation clean and we recommend that you gently bathe your wound in a warm bath each day, if possible. This may also help with your pain. **Do not use soap, or put salt or any perfumed products in the water until your wound has healed,** as these could irritate your wound site. Do not be alarmed if you notice blood in the bath, as this is quite normal and will reduce in time.

If you can, try to wash the area or use alcohol-free wet wipes to clean it after each bowel movement.

When can I return to work and normal activities?
This depends on how you feel and how active your job is. Do as much as you feel able to, but avoid any strenuous activity such as lifting, exercise or running during the first week or so. Build up to your normal level of activity gradually.
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Recovering after your peri anal abscess operation