

Pin Site Care

Information for patients

Division of Surgery

**Orthopaedic Trauma
Elective Orthopaedics**

This document can be provided in different languages and formats. For more information please contact:

Trauma Nurse Practitioner Office
Queen's Medical Centre
Tel: 0115 9249924 ext. 62472

Introduction

External fixation has been chosen as your treatment by your Consultant. The wires and pins are inserted into the bone and attached to the frame, stabilising it.

Pin site infections are one of the most common problems you may experience during your treatment. Therefore pin-site care is very important.

If your Consultant or Frame Nurse Practitioner have instructed you to adjust the struts or turners on your frame, this bone adjustment process may drag the wires and pins through the skin leaving a 'track-like' mark causing irritation and redness. During this time there will be an increased risk of developing a pin site infection.

How often should I clean pin sites?

Our guidelines follow the national consensus by the Royal College of Nursing that pin site care should be undertaken as frequently as necessary to keep the area clean, the minimum being weekly if clean and dry. If the pin sites leak or you have a pin site infection, clean daily.

Can I shower and take a bath?

You can shower in your frame when any surrounding wound is healed and no longer requires a dressing but avoid communal showers. Use a separate towel to dry your frame then undertake pin site care. It is not advisable to use a bath.

Can I swim?

At Nottingham University Hospitals we do not advise swimming, including hydrotherapy pools at physiotherapy.

How do I clean pin sites?

(See diagrams on following page)

1. Wash hands with liquid soap and apply alcohol gel. In your home environment you do not need to wear sterile gloves. A friend or family member assisting you should wear gloves.
2. Clean the metalwork of the whole fixator at least once a week with a clean wet cloth or if able, use a shower.
3. Remove dressings covering pin sites.
4. Pour chlorhexidine gluconate 0.5% solution into a small clean bowl and open the gauze swab packets.
5. Wash hands again with liquid soap and apply alcohol gel.
6. Clean the cleanest pin site first and any leaking pin site last. Wipe around each pin site with a wet gauze swab that is soaked in the solution. Use a separate swab for each Pin site.
7. Do not remove scabs that are tight at the pin site unless you have been told there is an infection.
8. Scabs and crusts that fall away easily remove and any extending up the pin.
9. Around each pin site tie another swab soaked in the solution.
10. If pin site is split or infected, a dressing will be required contact your frame nurse practitioner or GP to assess.

NB: if you develop any rash or irritation from the solution contact your frame Nurse Practitioner or GP and in this situation, use normal saline 0.9% solution.

Step-by-step guide to cleaning your pin sites and frame

At home before you commence, wash hands then apply hand gel. When undertaking yourself sterile gloves are not required. A health professional, friend or family member assisting should wear sterile gloves.



Clean your frame rings and all the metalwork at least once a week with a clean wet cloth. Showering is effective.



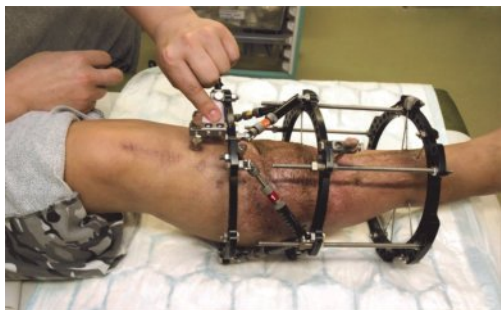
Step 1

Pour the solution into a clean bowl, enough to cover all the gauze swabs



Step 2

Take a wet gauze swab



Step 3

Use a separate gauze swab to clean around each pin site. Start with the cleanest pin, wipe away from the pin-site insertion



Step 4

Around each pin-site tie another gauze swab that is soaked in the solution



Step 5

Throughout the time in a frame it is recommended the pin-sites are covered.

How will I recognise a pin-site infection?

You may experience some discomfort around the pin sites throughout your treatment. If you experience any of the following symptoms contact your frame Nurse Practitioner, GP or one of the contact numbers given at the end of this booklet.

- Increase in pain that is different to what you usually experience
- Redness around the pin site
- Increase in swelling around the pin site
- Pin site leaking a fluid that is not clear
- Feeling unwell with a raised temperature

And finally...

If you have any questions, concerns or experience any difficulties undertaking pin site care following discharge from hospital, please contact your frame Nurse Practitioner or Trauma Nurse Practitioner team as soon as possible for further guidance.

If you don't have a family member or friend who can assist you with pin site care please inform the frame team so that a district nurse can be arranged for you.

Useful Contact Numbers (8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Frame Nurse Practitioner	07875165691
Trauma Nurse Practitioner Office	(0115) 924 9924 ext: 62472 (answerphone)
Trauma Co-ordinator	07713096964
Fracture Clinic (plaster room)	(0115) 924 9924 ext: 61037
Consultant's Secretary	

**Weekends contact the trauma co-ordinator number above
(9-5pm)**

**Out of hours problems attend your local Urgent Care Centre
or the Emergency Department**

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment please speak to a member of staff or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

Freephone: 0800 183 0204

From a mobile or abroad: 0115 924 9924 ext 65412 or 62301

E-mail: pals@nuh.nhs.uk

Letter: NUH NHS Trust, c/o PALS, Freepost NEA 14614, Nottingham NG7 1BR

www.nuh.nhs.uk



If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patientinformation@nuh.nhs.uk or phone 0115 924 9924 ext. 67184.

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.