

Do not smoke – smoking damages your entire body and can affect your immune system's ability to fight infection. If you smoke, giving up is the best thing that you can do for your general health.

Students

There may be students present during your consultation as part of their on-going training. Please let the staff know if you wish to be seen by a doctor only.

Who can I contact if I have a problem when I get home?

If you experience any problems related to your surgery or admission once you have been discharged home. Please feel free to contact 4A, 4B or 4C ward for advice from the nurse in charge. They will assist you via the telephone, advise you return to your GP or ask you to make your way to the ED department at Whiston Hospital depending upon the nature of your concern.

4A Ward – 0151 430 1420

4B Ward – 0151 430 1637

4B Ward – 0151 430 1643

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 426 1600



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Abscess Information

This leaflet can be made available
in alternative languages / formats on request.

如有需要，本传单可提供其他语言/版式
此單張的其他語言/格式版本可按要求提供

Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona
w innych językach/formatach.

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What is an abscess?

An abscess is a painful collection of pus that is caused by a bacterial infection. Abscesses may be found in any area of the body, but most abscesses presenting for urgent attention are found on the extremities, buttocks, breast, perianal area (the area around the anus), or from a hair follicle.

What does an abscess look and feel like?

An abscess often appears as a swollen, pus-filled lump under the surface of the skin, or it may look more like an open break in the skin. Abscesses are often red and painful. A boil is a common example of an abscess.

Who is affected by abscesses?

Anyone can develop an abscess, and they can occur almost anywhere in the body. They are caused by an infection in the root of a hair, or by a blocked sweat gland. Abscesses are more common among people who have diabetes.

What are the signs and symptoms of an abscess?

The signs and symptoms of an abscess depend on whereabouts it develops in your body. If you have an abscess, you may have symptoms such as: a smooth swelling under your skin, or an open wound, or sore, pus in the affected area that appears white, yellow or green, and may smell unpleasant, pain, warmth and redness in the affected area, feeling generally unwell (fever, chills and aches and pains) Abscesses can appear anywhere on your body. However, the skin around the anus (back passage) is one of the most common areas to be affected.

What causes abscesses?

Bacteria can cause a skin abscess when it is able to get under the surface of your skin. This may occur if you have a minor skin wound, such as a small cut or graze, or if an oil (sebaceous), or sweat gland in your skin becomes blocked.

How are abscesses treated?

Abscesses can be treated with antibiotics and either a drainage procedure, or surgery to remove the pus. The treatment that you receive for an abscess will depend on the type of abscess that you have and how large it is.

What surgery would be performed if you have an abscess?

If you need to have your abscess drained, it is likely that you will have a small operation under anesthetic. The anesthetic that is used will depend on the size and severity of your abscess. You may have a local anesthetic (you will be awake, but the area of the abscess will be numb), or a general anesthetic (you will be asleep).

You are normally able to go home on the same day as your surgery, unless the consultant is recommending keeping you in for intravenous antibiotic (through a needle in your arm) cover after your operation, this will be at the consultants discretion.

What is the recovery following surgery for an abscess?

You will need to have your wound dressings redressed daily by your practice nurse. Once the practice nurse is happy with how your wound is healing they will decide whether to change the dressing less frequently, you are advised to wash and dry yourself thoroughly to prevent infection, and you can eat and drink as normal. A high protein diet is advised to help the healing process. Depending on where your abscess is you may be advised to eat a high fibre diet to prevent constipation, as you may have difficulties with constipation if you have a perianal abscess, You are normally able to continue driving the day after your operation. It is advised to contact your insurance company to ask their advice. You may feel a little uncomfortable and choose not to drive for 48 hours if you have had surgery on the buttock area, perianal area or breast, as you may find it difficult to sit or turn the steering wheel.

How can I prevent getting an abscess?

Look after your skin – ensuring that your skin is clean, healthy and free of bacteria can help to reduce the risk of an abscess developing, Eat healthily – eating a diet that is rich in vitamins and minerals can help your immune system to work properly and fight off infection, Lose weight if you are overweight or obese you may be more at risk of developing abscesses due to bacteria that is found naturally on your body becoming trapped in the folds of your skin. You are also at greater risk of developing diabetes, which in turn will increase the likelihood of abscesses developing.