

## ANAL FISTULA

### Patient Information Leaflet

### ANAL FISTULA

You have been advised by your Consultant that you should undergo surgery. The following information will help you make an informed decision in agreeing to the surgery. It is important that you read the information fully.

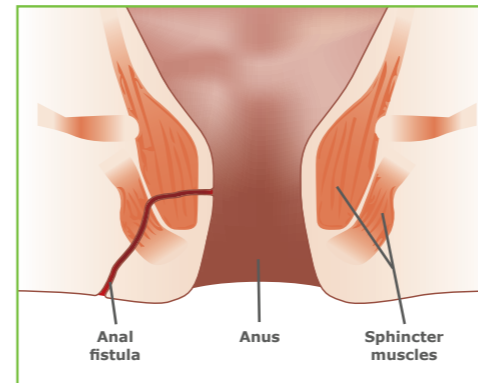
An anal fistula is an abnormal connection between the lining on the inside of your anal canal (back passage) and the skin near your anus.

Most anal fistulas are caused by an abscess (a collection of pus) which has developed in your anal canal (back passage). Just inside the anus there are small glands. When these glands get blocked, they can become infected and an abscess can develop.

A fistula is a small tunnel that forms under the skin and connects a previously infected anal gland to the skin on the buttocks outside the anus. The pus can drain away onto the skin on its own or by an operation. A fistula happens when the track, made by the pus on the way to the surface of the skin, stays open. Surgery is usually needed to treat an anal fistula.

#### Anal Fistula Surgery

Surgery for anal fistula is performed under a general anaesthetic. To lessen the risk of bowel incontinence (when you pass a motion without wanting to), your treatment may involve several operations over a number of months. The type of surgery you need will depend on where the fistula is.



If the fistula is below, or crosses, the lower part of the sphincter muscles, your surgeon will cut it open to the skin and leave the wound open, so that it can heal with healthy tissue.

If the fistula has branches that pass through the upper part of the sphincter muscles, your surgeon may place a special stitch, called a Seton stitch, in the fistula to allow pus to drain easily. This may be followed by further operations in future, including insertion of a fistula plug.

Any bowel surgery is associated with certain risks including complications related to general anaesthetic; bleeding, chest infection, infection, recurrence, deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolus. The risk of any operation is determined in part, by the nature of the operation. An individual's general health and other medical conditions are also factors that affect the risk of any operation. Your consultant will have discussed your individual risk for any operation with you at your consultation.

#### Specific complications of this operation

Difficulty passing urine, involuntarily passing wind or loose faeces and bowel incontinence.

In a small number of cases, the fistula can come back. An anal fistula can cause continued infection and pain. Symptoms usually get worse without an operation.

#### On Discharge from the Hampshire Clinic

You should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

You should rest for the first few days, walking as little as possible, to help the wound to heal. The wound often takes several weeks to heal completely and you may need to wear a pad until then. Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Recovery from surgery is very individual; some people experience a lot of pain and swelling and others may experience very little. You will be advised to take analgesia (painkillers) as needed, and you may need to take a mild laxative, as it is important to avoid constipation.

In the unlikely event that you should experience severe abdominal pain or excessive bleeding, please contact the nurses on the ward at the Hampshire Clinic, your consultant secretary, GP or attend the Accident and Emergency Department immediately, for assessment. Please inform them that you have recently had surgery.

Hampshire Clinic: 01256 357111  
Accident and Emergency, Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital:  
01256 473202 x4700

## Following Consultation

Following your consultation it has been recommended that you undergo anal fistula surgery. You will be booked in for a date to come into the Hampshire Clinic and will be given information related to this admission. You will receive information in the post from the Hampshire Clinic related to your stay.

You will be contacted by the pre-admission nurses to discuss any routine pre-operative tests you may require. If you need pre-operative tests such as blood tests, x-ray, ECG, swabs etc, the nurses will organise a date prior to your admission, at a convenient time. Typically, this is in the week preceding your operation and this is an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have or any concerns related to your hospital stay.

Please contact your insurance company with the dates, the expected length of your stay and details of your operation, including the specific codes related to this as advised by the secretary. You are advised at all times, to contact your insurance company prior to any admission, treatment, investigation or consultation to gain pre-authorisation from the insurance company. Your care and treatment with Basingstoke Colorectal is private and it is the responsibility of the patient to ensure insurance cover is authorised. If you require any assistance with this please contact us.

## Infection Control and prevention

Infections in hospital are worrying to everyone. We need your help to reduce the risk of infection. By working as a team, healthcare workers, patients and visitors can all make a difference. We can reduce the risk. Infection control is important to us all, at home and especially in hospital. We need to be more careful in hospital as patients are vulnerable. They are more vulnerable due to their illness, treatment, age or a combination of factors.

## Hand washing

The single most important way of reducing infection is by hand washing. Bacteria and viruses, which cause infections, can be carried by hands and passed person to person or from things to people.

Please clean your hands regularly. It is especially important:-

- After using the toilet or bathroom
- Before eating (both snacks and meals)
- Between entering and leaving any ward or department

You may use soap and water, or if your hands are visibly clean you may use alcohol gel instead. You will find alcohol gel throughout the Hampshire Clinic. Patients should feel they can ask a nurse or doctor if they have cleaned their hands before an examination.

## Advice

- If you are unwell, coughing or sneezing, cold or flu like symptoms, please cancel your admission.
- If you have diarrhoea or vomiting three days before admission, please contact the nursing staff.
- Do not walk about in bare feet, wear slippers or shoes.
- Use disposable flannels.
- Use liquid soap.
- Dressings on wounds and drip sites are designed to keep them clean and dry; do not touch them.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## ALL CORRESPONDENCE AND APPOINTMENTS

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