WATERFRONT
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

PATIENT INFORMATION · AFTERCARE

Labiaplasty Aftercare

General recovery guidance for labiaplasty based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written aftercare information. This online guide should be used alongside the official leaflet and the specific instructions given to you by your surgical team. This is a sensitive procedure - recovery is normal and manageable with proper care.

Typical recovery: 6 weeks for full recovery; 4 weeks for most activities · Reviewed 4 July 2026 · Version 1.0

When to get help — your traffic light guide

RED

Call 999 or go to A&E now if you have:

These can be life-threatening. Do not wait to call the hospital first.

- Heavy bleeding that won't stop with pressure
- High temperature (over 38°C) with confusion or unusual drowsiness

AMBER

Contact us now — do not wait — if you have:

- Temperature over 38°C with severe pain
- Signs of severe infection (spreading redness, severe swelling)
- Severe pain not relieved by medication
- Fainting or severe dizziness — often a side effect of strong painkillers such as dihydrocodeine; call us

Office hours (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm): 0131 376 3785

Evenings and weekends during your early recovery: Out-of-Hours Nurse Advice Line 07405322689 — our nurse can advise you, contact your surgeon, or direct you to NHS services.

After your early recovery period: call the hospital in office hours, or NHS 24 on 111.

Had your surgery at Spire Shawfair Park (overnight stay)? Contact Spire directly using the number on your discharge paperwork — not the Waterfront advice line.

GREEN

Tell us at your next appointment:

Anything else that is niggling or worrying you — no concern is too small. Mention it at your next appointment, or call us during office hours.

How to Use This Information

The advice below is based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written labiaplasty aftercare leaflet. It is general guidance for the average patient and may be adapted by your consultant for your individual circumstances.

Always follow the specific instructions given to you on the day of your surgery and in your printed leaflet. If there is ever a difference, follow your consultant's written or verbal instructions and contact us for clarification.

Important reminder: The initial appearance in the first week, while alarming, is completely normal and NOT your final result. You will look significantly different (and better) within 2–3 weeks as swelling reduces.

Post-Operative Checklist

- Make sure you have your painkillers — the nurse looking after you will go through them with you
- Numbing gel received (if prescribed)
- Pant liners for dressings
- Nurse appointment arranged (optional if living far away)
- Transport home arranged
- Emergency numbers saved to phone
- Wound care instructions understood

Wound Care

- Daily gentle shower with mild baby shampoo or gel
- Pat dry carefully (never rub)
- Use salt water rinse after toilet (1 teaspoon salt in 1 pint warm water)
- Change pant liners frequently
- Cold compress first 48 hours (never direct on skin, use liner between, 10 minutes at a time, only while awake)
- Air dry for a few minutes after shower

- Apply clean pant liner

Pain Management

- Take your painkillers as directed on their labels — every medicine you go home with is labelled with its dose and frequency, and your nurse will go through them with you before you leave. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can safely be taken together
- Apply numbing gel as directed if prescribed
- Take laxative (Lactulose) to prevent constipation and straining
- Take medication on schedule rather than waiting for pain

Activity Restrictions

- Showering: Day 1 onwards (gently)
- Driving: Week 2 onwards
- Desk work: Weeks 1–2 onwards
- Physical work: Week 2 onwards (assess individually)
- Light exercise: Week 4 onwards
- Full exercise: Week 6 onwards
- Cycling or spin: from around week 6, easing back gradually with a padded seat
- Swimming: Week 4 when fully healed
- Tampons: Avoid for 4 weeks
- Tight clothing: Avoid for 4–6 weeks
- Smoking: Avoid for minimum 2 weeks
- Alcohol: Avoid for 3 weeks
- Straining on toilet: Avoid (use laxative if needed)
- Baths longer than 15 minutes: Avoid
- Sexual activity: Avoid for 4–6 weeks (use lubricant when resuming, go slowly)

Before You Leave the Hospital

- **Painkillers:** Make sure you have your painkillers before you leave — the nurse looking after you will go through them with you.
- **Numbing gel (if prescribed):** Keep this with your painkillers for use as directed.
- **Pant liners:** You will need pant liners for the first week or two to manage discharge and protect clothing.

- **Nurse appointment (optional):** Arrange an optional nurse check-up if you live nearby and would like wound reassurance at week 1. This can be skipped if living far away.
- **Transport home:** You must have someone to take you home. Arrange this in advance.
- **Emergency numbers:** Save emergency contact numbers (see above) to your phone before leaving.
- **Wound care instructions:** Understand the wound care routine before leaving (shower, salt water rinse, drying).

What to Expect on the Day

You will feel sore and swollen when you first go home. This is completely normal. The swelling and appearance may seem alarming, but this is how it looks immediately after surgery - it is NOT your final result.

Plan to rest at home for the first few days. You may feel emotional - this is common and hormonal changes and pain can affect your mood. Be patient with yourself.

Key point: In 2–3 weeks, as swelling reduces, you'll notice dramatic improvement in both how it looks and how it feels. The initial appearance is temporary.

Medication Guide

- **Pain Relief**
- **Tip:** Take these on a schedule rather than waiting for pain to return. Regular medication is more effective than taking it when you're in pain.
- **Numbing Gel (if prescribed)** — Apply as directed by your surgeon. This helps with stinging when urinating and general discomfort.
- **Laxative (Lactulose)** — Take as directed to prevent constipation and straining on the toilet. Straining increases pain and swelling.
- Eat high-fibre foods and drink plenty of water to support bowel health during recovery.
- **Alcohol - AVOID for 3 Weeks** — Alcohol can increase bleeding, bruising, and swelling. Avoid completely for at least 3 weeks.

Wound Care Essentials

Daily Shower Routine

- **1. Start Day 1:** Take a gentle shower daily (lukewarm water)

- **2. Use mild products:** Use only mild baby shampoo or gentle gel - nothing fragranced or harsh
- **3. Rinse gently:** Let water rinse the area gently; don't use a cloth or sponge
- **4. Pat dry:** Pat gently with a clean towel - never rub
- **5. Air dry:** Leave the area to air dry for a few minutes
- **6. Fresh liner:** Put on a clean pant liner
- **Salt Water Rinse (Days 3–7+)**
- **Why use salt water?** Urine is acidic and irritates healing wounds. Salt water is soothing and helps prevent infection. It also cleanses the area gently.
- **How to make salt water: 1 teaspoon salt in 1 pint warm water**
- **When to use:**
- **After using the toilet:** Rinse immediately (all day, every day)
- **As a bath soak:** Sit in a bath of salt water for 15 minutes
- **Note:** Don't take baths longer than 15 minutes and avoid prolonged soaking until fully healed.
- **Cold Compress (First 48 Hours)**
- Cold reduces swelling and numbs discomfort in the first 48 hours.
- **Safety rules - IMPORTANT:**
- Always use a pant liner between ice pack and skin
- Never apply ice directly to skin
- Use for 10 minutes at a time
- Only while you're awake
- Stop after 48 hours
- **How to use:** Place cold compress (ice pack or frozen peas in a towel) with a pant liner between it and your skin. Apply for 10 minutes, remove, wait 10 minutes, repeat as needed.

Pant Liners

- Change frequently (at least every few hours, or when visibly soiled)
- You may need multiple liners daily in the first week
- Keeps you clean and reduces infection risk
- Protects clothing from discharge and blood

Understanding Your Results

Healing Timeline & What to Expect

- **Week 1 - Very Swollen** — Not the final result. Extreme swelling is normal. May look very different - this is temporary.

- **Week 2 - Swelling Reducing** — Shape emerging. Much improved appearance. More resembles final result.
- **Week 4 - Most Swelling Gone** — Approaching final appearance. Stitches dissolving. Shape clearer.
- **Month 3 - Final Appearance** — Final shape and appearance. Swelling resolved. Scars settling.
- **Month 6 - Scars Fully Matured** — Scars thin and faint. Complete healing. Final aesthetic result.
- **Common Concerns (All Normal!)**
- **Initial appearance alarming:** This is normal. Weeks 1–2 swelling decreases dramatically.
- **Asymmetry during healing:** Completely normal. Often resolves by weeks 3–4 as swelling reduces evenly.
- **Small openings in wound:** These appear during healing and will close. Very normal.
- **Visible stitches:** Dissolvable stitches become visible and irritate slightly - normal and temporary.
- **Lumpy areas:** May feel lumpy during healing - this smooths out as swelling reduces.
- **Sensitivity lasting weeks:** Healing tissues are sensitive. This gradually improves over weeks.

Lifestyle Guidelines

What to DO

- Shower daily with mild products
- Use salt water after toilet
- Wear loose cotton underwear
- Change pant liners regularly
- Walk gently from day 1
- Eat high-fibre foods
- Take laxatives if needed to prevent straining
- Be patient - healing takes time
- **What to AVOID**
- Tampons (avoid 4 weeks)
- Tight clothing (avoid 4–6 weeks)
- Smoking (avoid minimum 2 weeks)
- Alcohol (avoid 3 weeks)
- Straining on toilet (use laxatives)
- Baths longer than 15 minutes
- Swimming (until fully healed, 4 weeks)
- Sexual activity (avoid 4–6 weeks)

Activity Timeline

- **Showering** — Day 1 onwards
- **Driving** — Week 2 onwards
- **Desk work** — Weeks 1–2 onwards
- **Physical work** — Week 2 onwards (assess individually)
- **Light exercise (walking, yoga)** — Week 4 onwards
- **Full exercise** — Week 6 onwards
- **Cycling / spin** — From around week 6, easing back gradually with a padded, comfortable seat
- **Swimming** — Week 4 when healed
- **Tampons** — Week 4 onwards
- **Sexual intercourse** — Weeks 4–6 (use lubricant, go slowly)
- **Travel/holidays** — Week 4 onwards

Scar Care & Long-Term Healing

After Week 4

- Scars may feel sensitive initially - this is normal
- Gentle massage helps desensitise scars
- Use plain moisturiser for massage
- Sensitivity resolves over subsequent months
- **Long-Term (Months 3–6+)**
- Scars fade to thin lines
- Usually barely visible after 3–4 months
- Colour and texture improve with time
- Full maturation takes 6–12 months
- Most patients report scars become very faint
- **Scar massage technique:** After week 4, gently massage scars in circular motions with plain moisturiser. This helps improve texture and desensitise the area. Continue for several months as tolerated.

Important Reminders

- **Your initial appearance is not your final result.** The swelling and appearance in weeks 1–2 will change dramatically as healing progresses.

- **Mood changes are normal.** Hormonal changes, pain, and the initial appearance can affect your emotions. These feelings pass as you heal.
- **Follow your specific instructions.** Every patient is different. Always follow the instructions given to you by your surgical team - they know your individual case.
- **Be patient with yourself.** Full recovery takes time. Weeks 2–3 shows dramatic improvement, but healing continues for months.
- **Contact us if unsure.** Use the traffic light system to guide when to contact us. We're here to support you.

Your Recovery, Stage by Stage

Days 1–2 — Peak Discomfort

Immediate post-surgery; significant swelling and pain

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Significant swelling (looks alarming but is completely normal)
- Pain worst in first 48 hours
- Blood on pant liners
- Stinging when urinating
- Mood changes or feelings of regret (very common)
- Area looks very different from before

CARE ROUTINE

- Take painkillers regularly on schedule (don't wait for pain)
- Apply numbing gel if provided
- Change pant liners frequently
- Take daily gentle shower
- Pat area dry carefully (never rub)
- Use cold compress with pant liner between skin (10 minutes at a time, only while awake)
- Wear loose cotton underwear

COMFORT

- Apply numbing gel as directed
- Take laxative (Lactulose) to prevent constipation and straining

Days 3–7 — Daily Improvement

Swelling may worsen before improving; pain decreasing

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Pain decreasing daily

- Swelling may worsen before improving
- Walking becomes easier
- Less blood staining on liners

CARE ROUTINE

- Continue pain relief as needed
- Shower daily with mild baby shampoo or gentle gel
- Use salt water rinse after toilet (1 teaspoon salt in 1 pint warm water)
- Consider 15-minute salt water bath soak
- Gentle walking encouraged
- Wear loose cotton underwear
- Change pant liners regularly

COMFORT

- Continue paracetamol and ibuprofen as needed
- Pain should be gradually decreasing
- Most patients need less medication by day 7

Week 1 (Optional) — Nurse Check-Up

Optional wound check and reassurance

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Continuing improvement
- Swelling still present but reducing

CARE ROUTINE

- Schedule optional nurse appointment for wound check
- Nurse can provide reassurance about appearance
- All questions answered
- Can be skipped if living far away

COMFORT

- Minimal pain expected

Week 2 — Return to Normality

Much improved; can return to work and driving

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Swelling much reduced
- Walking normally
- Minimal pain
- Can return to desk work comfortably

- Can drive

CARE ROUTINE

- Continue gentle shower routine
- Use salt water rinse after toilet
- Wear loose cotton underwear
- Light walking and movement
- Can return to desk work
- Can drive
- Continue to avoid tight clothing
- Avoid strenuous activity
- No sexual activity yet

COMFORT

- Minimal or no pain medication needed

Weeks 3–4 — Visible Healing

Wounds healed; most swelling gone; stitches dissolving

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Wounds healed
- Most swelling gone
- Dissolvable stitches visible (may irritate slightly)
- Small openings may appear (will heal)
- Some asymmetry normal during healing
- Stitches dissolve by week 4
- Stitches may rub off naturally

CARE ROUTINE

- Continue shower and salt water routine as needed
- Don't pull at stitches
- Continue wearing loose clothing
- Gentle walking and activity
- Avoid tight clothing and synthetic materials
- No sexual activity yet
- No tampons yet

COMFORT

- Pain-free or minimal discomfort expected

Weeks 4–6 — Nearly Healed

Can resume light exercise; preparing for full recovery

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Nearly complete healing
- Majority of swelling gone
- Can resume exercise with care
- Appearance approaching final result

CARE ROUTINE

- Light exercise can resume (walking, gentle yoga)
- Can use tampons after week 4
- Sexual activity permitted after weeks 4–6 (use lubricant, go slowly)
- Continue normal shower routine
- Normal clothing
- Can swim when fully healed (week 4)
- Travel and holidays permitted

COMFORT

- No pain expected

Week 6+ — Full Recovery

Complete healing; all activities allowed

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Full recovery achieved
- Scars continuing to fade
- Final appearance stabilizing
- All activities permitted

CARE ROUTINE

- All normal activities allowed
- Full exercise permitted
- Resume all sexual activity
- Normal clothing and hygiene
- Continue scar care if needed

COMFORT

- No pain expected

Follow-Up Appointments

Week 1 (Optional) — Optional nurse wound check appointment if you live nearby and would like reassurance.

- Wound inspection
- Answer your questions about healing
- Provide reassurance about appearance
- Confirm stitches are dissolvable (no removal needed)
- Can be skipped if living far away - this is optional.

Further nurse reviews — as needed — Some patients need further nurse reviews. If so, the nurses will arrange these with you and will discharge you from nurse-led care once they are happy your wounds have healed.

Around 6 months — surgeon review (final follow-up) — Your surgeon will usually see you at around 6 months to assess your final result. Your surgeon is always available to review you sooner if required, and in some circumstances may wish to see you before your final follow-up.

Your appointment schedule may vary. Always follow the specific dates and times given in your appointment card. Contact us if you need to reschedule.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the swelling look so alarming? Is this normal?

Yes, extreme swelling is completely normal in the first week after labiaplasty. This is one of the most swollen areas of the body post-surgery. The swelling looks very different from before, which can be alarming, but it is NOT the final result. You will look completely different in 2–3 weeks as the swelling reduces. This is just temporary.

Is it normal to regret the surgery immediately after?

Yes, mood changes and doubts are very common in the first few days. Hormonal changes, pain, and the alarming appearance contribute to these feelings. These feelings almost always pass as you heal and see improvement. Be patient with yourself - your body and mind are adjusting to surgery.

Why does it sting when I urinate?

Urine is acidic and irritates the healing wound. This is normal. Use the salt water rinse (1 teaspoon salt in 1 pint warm water) after you use the toilet to soothe the area. You can also apply numbing gel if prescribed.

When will the stitches disappear?

Your stitches are dissolvable and typically disappear by weeks 3–4. You may see them as small visible bits that rub off naturally. Do not pull at them - they'll come away on their own. If they're still visible after 4 weeks and causing irritation, contact us.

Can I use a hair dryer on the area?

Yes, but only on the cool setting, held at a distance. Never use hot air. Some patients find this helpful for drying after showers, but it's not necessary - gentle patting with a clean towel is fine.

When can I have sexual intercourse?

Avoid sexual activity for 4–6 weeks depending on your healing. When you resume, use plenty of lubricant and go slowly. If there's any pain, stop and wait longer. Your surgeon will give you specific guidance based on your individual healing.

Is asymmetry normal?

Yes, asymmetry is very common, especially during the healing process. Swelling often reduces at different rates on each side. By 3 months (final appearance), asymmetry usually becomes much less noticeable. Some natural asymmetry is normal and expected.

What are these visible stitches that look irritated?

These are your dissolvable stitches becoming visible as the skin heals. They may feel slightly irritated, but this is normal. Don't pull at them. They'll dissolve or rub away naturally by week 4.

I can see small openings in the wound - is this bad?

Small surface openings can appear during healing and are normal. They will heal over. If you have concerns about size or if they're not improving, contact us for reassurance.

Will there be visible scars?

Scars fade significantly over time. After week 4, scars may feel sensitive initially - gentle massage with plain moisturiser helps desensitise them. Scars fade to thin lines and are usually barely visible. Full maturation takes 6–12 months. Long-term, most patients report scars are very faint.