

Wound seroma

What is a wound seroma?

A seroma is a collection of healing fluid under the skin. It can collect in a wound after removal of tissue (such as a growth, fat or muscle), or when lymph nodes have been removed.

Seromas can be a normal part of wound healing. Suction drains are placed in the wound at the end of the operation to encourage fluid to drain from the body as it collects. However, when these drains are removed sometimes the fluid continues to collect and forms a seroma. The drains usually stay in place for 1–3 weeks. The reason we do not leave the drains in for longer is because there is a risk that infection from skin bacteria will get into the drain and cause infection.

How is a seroma treated?

If a seroma develops, it is a nuisance rather than a cause for concern. If you think that your wound is swollen after going home, please contact your clinical team at The Royal Marsden. If required, we will arrange for you to be seen in the Outpatient Department.

If your seroma is small and does not feel tight, the doctor may decide you do not need any treatment for it. In time your body will reabsorb the fluid by itself. If your seroma is large, causing tension in the tissues or discomfort, then the doctor may suggest removing the fluid using a needle and syringe. This procedure is called aspiration and is not usually painful.

Will the seroma come back?

Unfortunately, seromas can come back and may need aspirating several times. This may be necessary once or twice a week. There is nothing that you can do to stop a seroma developing. Eventually the fluid stops collecting.

When do you need to contact us?

Very occasionally a seroma becomes infected. The signs of this are redness of the skin and you may have a fever and feel unwell. If this happens, please contact the team. We will need to remove the fluid with a needle (aspirate) and you may need to take a course of antibiotics. This can also occur after multiple aspirations, and although infrequent, risk of infection is factored into our decision to aspirate.

Contact details

If you have any concerns or questions about seroma you can call:

Your specialist nurse:.....



Telephone:.....

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline:
(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

020 8915 6899

