WATERFRONT
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

PATIENT INFORMATION · AFTERCARE

Liposuction Aftercare

General recovery guidance for liposuction 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.

Typical recovery: 6 weeks for most activities, final results over 3–6 months · Reviewed 12 November 2026 · Version 1.1

Having your surgery at Spire? Your nursing care after surgery, including wound checks and dressings, is at Spire. Please follow the discharge instructions Spire gives you, and contact Spire using the number on your discharge paperwork, not the Waterfront advice line. Your later follow-up is at Waterfront. The general recovery advice in this leaflet still applies.

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.

- Sudden shortness of breath or chest pain
- One leg suddenly swollen and painful (possible blood clot)
- High fever above 38°C with confusion
- Heavy bleeding that won't stop

AMBER

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

- Signs of severe infection (spreading redness, pus, severe pain)

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.

Related Information Leaflets

Separate leaflets about the procedure itself — not the aftercare instructions above. Tap a title to download, or find them all on your procedure page in the portal.

- Liposuction, Patient Leaflet (https://waterfront-patient-portal.netlify.app/waterfrontaftercare/liposuction_patient_leaflet.pdf)

How to Use This Information

The advice below is based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written liposuction 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.

Post-Operative Checklist

- Pain medications (including dihydrocodeine) received
- Dressings applied and comfortable
- Follow-up appointment card received with contact details
- Transport home arranged
- Responsible adult with you for first night if general anaesthetic used
- Emergency numbers saved to phone
- Medication schedule understood
- Questions answered by nurse or surgical team

Wound Care

- Shower from day 1, pat skin dry gently after washing

- Do not soak in baths, hot tubs, or swimming pools for first 2 weeks
- Keep small incision sites clean and dry
- Watch for signs of infection: spreading redness, pus discharge, or severe pain
- Attend week 1 nurse appointment for dressing removal and wound check
- Once wounds fully closed (around week 3), begin scar care with moisturizer or bio-oil

Pain Management

- Take paracetamol 1-2 tablets (500mg each) every 4–6 hours, max 8 tablets daily
- Take ibuprofen 1-2 tablets (200mg each) every 6–8 hours, max 6 tablets daily
- Take dihydrocodeine as directed for severe pain
- Always take medication with food
- Avoid alcohol while taking painkillers
- Do not exceed maximum doses prescribed
- Most pain subsides significantly after first week
- Contact your surgeon if pain is not controlled

Activity Restrictions

- Showering: permitted from day 1
- Light walking: from day 1 (short walks every few hours)
- Driving: week 1 if no longer taking strong painkillers
- Desk work: week 2
- Physical work: end of week 2
- Short flights (under 3 hours): week 1
- Long flights (over 6 hours): 3 to 4 weeks after a general anaesthetic, about 2 weeks after a local
- Gentle exercise (walking, light stretching): week 4
- Full exercise: week 6
- Swimming: week 4 when wounds fully healed
- Avoid smoking and vaping nicotine for at least 4 weeks, smoking significantly impairs wound healing and increases infection risk
- Avoid alcohol while taking painkillers and for 3 weeks post-surgery
- Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activity for 4 weeks
- Avoid hot baths for 2 weeks
- Avoid direct sun on treated areas for 6 weeks, then high-SPF (30+) sunscreen for at least a year to prevent scar darkening

- Avoid tight clothing over treated areas

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.
- **Dressings:** Applied before discharge. Keep the treated area clean and dry.
- **Follow-up appointment:** You will be given a card with details of your first nurse check appointment.
- **Responsible adult:** If general anaesthetic was used, you must have a responsible adult with you for the first night.

Medication Guide

- **Paracetamol (standard tablets or soluble)**
- **Dose:** 1-2 tablets (500mg each)
- **Frequency:** Every 4–6 hours
- **Maximum:** 8 tablets daily
- **Notes:** Take with food, safe for most people
- **Ibuprofen (e.g., Ibuprofen, Brufen)**
- **Dose:** 1-2 tablets (200mg each)
- **Frequency:** Every 6–8 hours
- **Maximum:** 6 tablets daily
- **Notes:** Take with food to prevent stomach upset
- **Dihydrocodeine (Strong Painkiller)**
- **Dose:** As directed by your surgeon
- **Uses:** For severe pain if other medications insufficient
- **Important:** Do not drive or operate machinery while taking this
- **Notes:** Take with food, may cause drowsiness
- **Important:** Paracetamol and ibuprofen can safely be taken together, taking both regularly usually controls pain better than either alone. Take ibuprofen with food, follow the doses on the labels, and avoid alcohol while taking painkillers. Contact us if your pain is not controlled despite taking them as directed.

Compression Garments (Optional)

Compression garments are not required from our perspective, but some patients find them helpful for reducing swelling and supporting the contouring results. Discuss whether a compression garment is right for you with your surgeon during your consultation. If you decide to wear one, your nurse can advise you on fit and duration.

What to Look For in a Compression Garment

- **Appropriate coverage** for your treated areas
- **Adjustable closures** (hooks, velcro, or clips) for comfort as swelling changes
- **Breathable fabric** that allows skin to breathe
- **Firm but comfortable** fit without cutting off circulation
- **Where to Purchase**, If your surgeon recommends purchasing a compression garment, you can find them at:
- M&S
- Tesco
- Asda
- Macom
- Lipoelastic
- **Note:** Use code QUABA for a discount. Waterfront has no financial affiliation with these suppliers.

Scar Care

When to Start Scar Care

Begin scar care at **week 3** once your wounds are fully closed and any stitches or steri-strips are removed.

Daily Scar Care Routine

- **1. Clean:** Gently clean the scar area with mild soap and water
- **2. Dry:** Pat the area dry gently with a soft cloth
- **3. Apply:** Apply bio-oil, E45 cream, or Aveeno moisturizer to the scar
- **4. Massage:** Massage the area in gentle circular motions for 2–3 minutes
- **5. Repeat:** Repeat this routine twice daily for best results
- **Scar Appearance Timeline**
- **Weeks 3–4:** Start gentle massage as scars begin to heal
- **Months 1–3:** Scars appear pink or red (this is normal)

- **Months 3–6:** Gradual fading of colour and texture
- **Month 6+:** Continue scar care for best long-term results

Lifestyle Guidelines

✓ **DO**

- Keep dressings clean and follow wound care instructions
- Walk regularly to encourage circulation
- Drink 8-10 glasses of water daily
- Eat a healthy diet with plenty of protein
- Sleep in any comfortable position with pillows for support
- Take your medications as prescribed
- Attend all your follow-up appointments
- Ask questions if you're unsure about anything
- ✗ **AVOID**
- Smoking or vaping nicotine for at least 4 weeks
- Alcohol while taking painkillers
- Alcohol for 3 weeks after surgery
- Heavy lifting for 4 weeks
- Strenuous exercise for 6 weeks
- Hot baths for 2 weeks
- Direct sun on treated areas for 6 weeks (then high SPF for a year)
- Tight clothing over treated areas
- Missing follow-up appointments

Your Recovery, Stage by Stage

Days 1–3 — Early Recovery

Immediate post-surgery care and managing initial symptoms

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Moderate to severe pain at treatment sites
- Significant swelling and tightness
- Bruising that gets worse before it improves
- Tiredness and emotional sensitivity

- Small amount of fluid leaking from incisions

CARE ROUTINE

- Take painkillers regularly (don't wait for pain to worsen)
- Keep dressings clean and dry
- Rest but take short walks every few hours to encourage circulation
- Drink 8-10 glasses of water daily
- Sleep in any comfortable position
- Shower from day 1 onwards
- Pat skin dry gently after washing
- Do not soak in baths during first 2 weeks

COMFORT

- Take paracetamol 1-2 tablets (500mg each) every 4–6 hours (max 8 tablets daily)
- Take ibuprofen 1-2 tablets (200mg each) every 6–8 hours (max 6 tablets daily)
- Take dihydrocodeine as directed by your surgeon
- Always take medication with food
- Do not exceed maximum doses
- Avoid alcohol while taking painkillers
- Contact your surgeon if pain is not controlled

Days 4–7 — Improving Daily

Gradual reduction in pain and swelling

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Pain gradually decreasing
- Bruising at its worst, then beginning to fade
- More energy returning
- Ready for first check-up appointment

CARE ROUTINE

- Continue gentle movement as advised
- Increase amount of walking (gently)
- Continue regular hydration (8-10 glasses water daily)
- Attend first nurse check-up appointment (usually around day 7)
- May start driving if not taking strong painkillers

COMFORT

- Pain should be noticeably decreasing
- May reduce to paracetamol and ibuprofen only
- Continue medication as needed

- Gradually reducing need for strong painkillers

Week 1 Check-Up — Nurse Appointment

First post-operative assessment and wound care

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Nurse will assess your recovery progress
- Dressings will be removed
- Healing will be checked
- Stitches will be assessed

CARE ROUTINE

- Attend your scheduled nurse appointment
- Nurse will remove dressings
- Non-dissolving stitches will be removed if needed
- Steri-strips will be removed if still in place
- Ask any questions during this appointment

COMFORT

- Pain should be significantly improved
- Continue pain relief as advised

Week 2 — Return to Light Work

Resuming some normal activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Pain continuing to decrease
- Bruising gradually fading
- More energy
- Able to manage most daily activities
- Swelling starting to reduce noticeably

CARE ROUTINE

- Follow wound care instructions as advised
- Can return to desk work and light activities
- Most daily tasks manageable
- Gentle walking encouraged
- May stop painkillers if comfortable

COMFORT

- Most patients able to stop or significantly reduce painkillers

- Use paracetamol/ibuprofen as needed for mild discomfort

Weeks 3–4 — Increased Activity

Gradual return to normal activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- 80-90% of swelling gone
- Bruising almost completely resolved
- May feel firm lumps in treated areas (this is normal)
- Feeling much more like yourself
- Shooting pains as nerves reconnect (normal)

CARE ROUTINE

- Follow nurse guidance on activity levels
- Start moisturizing scars with bio-oil or recommended cream
- Gentle scar massage in circular motions (2–3 minutes, twice daily)
- Can resume gentle exercise (walking, light stretching)
- Full range of activities manageable

COMFORT

- Most pain resolved
- Occasional mild discomfort only
- No medication typically needed

Months 2–6 — Final Results

Final settling and scar maturation

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Final results emerging and becoming clearer
- Scars continuing to fade
- Complete return to normal activities
- Firm lumps softening over time

CARE ROUTINE

- Continue scar care routine
- Continue scar care (moisturizing twice daily for best results)
- Can resume full exercise from week 6
- Can sunbathe after 6 weeks, but use high SPF for one year
- Swimming permitted once wounds fully healed (week 4)
- Regular follow-up appointments as scheduled

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full recovery achieved

Follow-Up Appointments

Week 1 Nurse Check (Days 7–10) — Your first post-operative appointment to assess healing and manage any concerns.

- Dressing removal
- Wound healing assessment
- Non-dissolving stitch removal if needed
- Steri-strip removal
- Questions answered by nurse

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

How long do I need to wear the compression garment?
Compression garments are not required from our perspective but some patients find them helpful for reducing swelling and supporting contouring. Discuss this with your surgeon during your consultation. If you choose to wear one, your nurse can advise on fit and duration.

When will I see my final results?
Initial improvement is noticeable by week 4 as swelling reduces. Final results emerge over 3–6 months as all swelling completely resolves and skin contracts.

Is it normal to feel lumpy areas after liposuction?
Yes, firm lumps are completely normal and expected. They are areas of firm tissue under the skin that will gradually soften over 3–6 months with massage and time.

Can I sunbathe after liposuction?

Avoid direct sun exposure on treated areas for at least 6 weeks. After 6 weeks, use a high SPF (30+) sunscreen when in the sun for at least one year to prevent scar darkening.

Why am I experiencing shooting pains?

Shooting pains or electric sensations are caused by nerves reconnecting as they heal. This is completely normal and usually improves over 3–6 months.

When can I drink alcohol after liposuction?

Avoid alcohol while taking painkillers and for at least 3 weeks after surgery. This allows your body to heal properly without the added stress of alcohol.