

# Removal of Kirschner Wires (K-Wires) in Orthopaedic Outpatient Clinic

Information for patients, relatives and carers

- ① For more information, please contact your local plaster room or orthopaedic department

Contact details are on page 6 of this leaflet

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# **What are K-wires?**

K-Wires or Kirschner wires are sterile stainless steel pins that are used commonly in Orthopaedic surgery to hold bones in place while they heal.

The wires are left sticking out of the skin to allow them to be removed easily in the outpatient department without the need for an anaesthetic.

Plaster casts are used as extra support for hand, wrist and elbow fractures that have been operated on using k-wires but are uncommon for toes and fingers.

The wires remain in place for between three and six weeks, this is determined by the purpose of the wires and the consultant's preference.

If you do not require a plaster cast your wires will be covered with a dressing to reduce the risk of them being caught or getting infected.

# **Preparing for your appointment**

It is advisable that you take some simple pain relief (paracetamol) before attending your appointment as having the wires removed can sometimes cause mild discomfort or aching in the area during the procedure and afterwards. If you have a plaster cast to support your wires you will be taken to the plaster room first for this to be removed. You may also be required to have an up to date X-ray.

## **How are the wires removed?**

The dressings will be taken off and the sites where the wires come through the skin are cleaned with antiseptic. Sterile pliers are used to loosen the wires by gently turning them. The practitioner will then remove the wires quickly by pulling the curved or banded end whilst holding the limb firmly. Pressure will be applied to the site to stop any bleeding and a dry dressing applied.

## **After care**

Once the wires have been removed and the dressing applied you must keep this on for two to three days, making sure you keep it dry until the wounds have healed and sealed. This will reduce the risk of infection. You may wash and moisturise avoiding the dressing. After the holes are scabbed over, you may then start to wash the area gently but do not soak the wound until it has completely healed. Check that the wire sites are not showing any signs of becoming infected. Look out for spreading redness, swelling and increasing pain. Seek advice from your healthcare professional if you have any concerns.

It is normal to have some stiffness and weakness following your k-wires but as you start to increase your activity it will continue to regain its normal strength and movement.

## **K-wires in children**

If it is your child who needs this procedure, it is important that they understand what will happen when they arrive at the appointment, as this will help relieve any anxiety they have.

Young children may also get worried because they can remember that the initial injury was painful. They may fear that the removal of the cast will bring back the pain.

They need reassurance that this will not be the case. As a parent you will judge the best way to prepare your child. Bringing something to distract your child for example a book, some music or video device can often help.

Your child may need another cast for a further week or so, just remind them and others to be more careful while things fully heal.

## **Useful contact numbers**

### **York Hospital patients**

York Plaster Room  
Telephone: 01904 726523  
Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm  
Bank holidays: Closed

York Orthopaedic  
Department:  
Telephone:  
01904 726537

### **Scarborough Hospital patients**

Scarborough Plaster Room  
Telephone: 01723 342042  
Monday to Thursday  
8.30am to 5pm,  
Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm  
Bank holidays: Closed

Scarborough  
Orthopaedic  
Department:  
Telephone:  
01723 368111

### **Bridlington Hospital patients**

Bridlington Plaster Room  
Telephone: 01262 423070  
Tuesday: pm only  
Thursday: pm only  
Bank holidays: Closed

Bridlington Orthopaedic  
Department  
Telephone:  
01262 606666

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Jo Bradley-Smith, Orthopaedic Practitioner Lead

Telephone: 01904 726523

Email: [Joanne.bradley-smith@nhs.net](mailto:Joanne.bradley-smith@nhs.net)

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

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