



Scars and congenital heart disease (CHD) surgery

This CHF information sheet describes how parents and carers can approach the subject of heart surgery scarring; how this topic can be introduced to their heart child and siblings, and offers further information resources.

A gentle conversation with a strong message

- Talking about heart surgery scarring with your heart child will be a gentle conversation that only you as their parent, carer and Number One Advocate will know (1) how to do (2) and when to do.
- This is a sensitive subject that can be started before your child has their heart surgery, and if your child has siblings, you may consider that it will be useful to gently introduce this subject to them too.
- Parents have shared with CHF how useful they have found it to approach the conversation with a CHF Molly's dolly to hand.



The rag dolls are available free of charge to children with heart conditions in the UK, and only require the signature of a healthcare professional, for example a Cardiac Liaison Nurse, Doctor or Play Specialist.

Each doll can be personalised for your child, with parents marking the exact scars of their child's forthcoming operation via CHF's Molly's dolly [application form](#).

Scars tell strong and resilient stories

Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children advises that:

'To promote good wound healing, we do not recommend the use of creams, lotions or oils on the area until after your child's follow up review. This is usually six to eight weeks after surgery.'

- The scar will be a key focus after your child's heart surgery, and you will know how best to talk about it in a positive way to your heart child and siblings.
- All scars tell stories, and the affirmative and strong way that you can explain this to your heart child, will ensure that they build positive coping skills and resilience for their continued health journey.



Scarring support for parents and children

Find out as much as possible from your child's Cardiac Liaison Nurse and consultant about the best way to care for your child's scar after surgery.

If you would like to speak with other parents who are experiencing the same congenital heart disease (CHD) journey with their child, there are several groups that offer CHD information and support.

Some groups to consider are:

Children's Heart Association
www.heartchild.info

ECHO: Connecting the Children's Heart Community <https://echo-uk.org/>

Heartline Families
www.heartline.org.uk

Little Hearts Matter
www.lhm.org.uk

South Wales and South West Congenital Heart Disease Network
<https://www.swschd.co.uk/>

About this document:

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To inform CHF of a comment or suggestion, please contact us via info@chfed.org.uk or Tel: 0300 561 0065.

Evidence and sources of information for this CHF information sheet can be obtained at:

(1)

Leaving hospital after child heart surgery Great Ormond Street Hospital. London 2019. Available at:
<https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/medical-information/procedures-and-treatments/leaving-hospital-after-heart-operation>

(2)

The Children's Heart Federation (CHF)'s Molly's dolly webpage. 2019. Available at:
<http://www.chfed.org.uk/how-we-help/mollys-dolly/>

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