



Miklós Kassai MD, EBSQ colo
Consultant General and
European Colorectal Surgeon

Patient Information for Consent

GS06lite Abscess Incision and Drainage

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Local information

Private secretary:
Fiona Clemets
Tel: 01534 880 030

Private Clinic:
Little Grove Clinic
La Rue De Haut
St Lawrence
Jersey
JE3 1JZ

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This document will give you information about an abscess incision and drainage. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is an abscess?

An abscess is a collection of pus surrounded by a wall of tissue. An abscess happens when your body tries to control infection. It causes a painful lump and can make you feel unwell (see figure 1). You can get an abscess anywhere in your body.



Figure 1
An abscess

What are the benefits of surgery?

You should no longer have the abscess. Surgery should prevent the serious complications that an abscess can cause.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

If an abscess is small, antibiotics may work. Sometimes draining the pus with a needle can help.

What does the operation involve?

A small abscess can be drained under a local anaesthetic but most need a general anaesthetic. The operation usually takes 10 to 20 minutes. Your surgeon will make a cut on your skin over the abscess. Once the pus has been removed, the cavity needs to heal upwards from its floor so the opening in your skin is left open. If the cavity is deep, your surgeon will place an antiseptic dressing in it.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots

2 Specific complications

- The abscess keeps coming back

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

Your doctor will tell you when you can return to work.

Most people make a full recovery and can return to normal activities.

Summary

An abscess is a collection of pus that can make you feel unwell. Surgery should prevent the serious complications that an abscess can cause.

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