

What is an abscess?

Collection of fluid known as pus.

What are the symptoms?

Painful lump, which may be accompanied by fever or chills.

What tests are required?

Usually none, as the diagnosis remains clinical. Occasionally, an ultrasound may be useful where the diagnosis remains uncertain.

What are the options of management?

Typically, surgical, although on occasions antibiotics alone for a small abscess may be considered selectively.

Surgery is performed by an open technique with an incision the same dimension as the abscess and the wound left open with a covering dressing.

What are the possible complications?

- Recurrent infection
- Bleeding

What to expect following your procedure?

This procedure is performed under a general anaesthetic and often as a day case. You will wake from anaesthesia with a dressing over the wound which is usually both packed loosely and covered by a dressing. It is normal to experience some pain from the procedure which is easily managed with painkillers. You will be encouraged to ambulate after surgery and will be discharged from hospital if you are tolerating a diet, your pain is controlled with painkillers, and you are ambulating independently. You will be discharged under the care of nurses who will change your dressings on a daily or second daily basis until the wound has healed. Alternatively, you may attend your General Practitioners clinic for regular dressing care.

Gentle exercises are encouraged. You may drive if you are able to put your foot on the brake in an emergency or have ceased taking any painkillers. Usually this occurs after 1-2 days.

Post-operative follow-up usually occurs in two weeks and will be arranged on discharge with your surgeon.