

What are the treatment options?

Treatment can include:

- antibiotics (oral or intra-venous)
- wound management strategies
- negative pressure dressings
- further surgery to wash out the area and remove infected metalwork if necessary.

Any questions?

Please rest assured FRI is an uncommon event but it is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms during your recovery.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact:
Fracture Clinic on 01872 253091 Monday to Friday (9am – 4pm).

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690



Fracture related infection



Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients who have had a surgical procedure to fix their broken bone (fracture).

An uncommon complication following surgically managed fractures is infection. The consequences of infection can be serious so effective prevention, detection and management is very important.

What is a fracture related infection (FRI)?

Following surgery and implantation of metallic components (such as plates and screws) the development of infection at the site of surgery can occur in up to 1-2% of patients but can be as high as 30% where the fracture breaks through the skin (an 'open' fracture). FRI can lead to delayed healing of soft tissue and bone and, if untreated, lead to more global and serious infection in other body systems.

Who is at higher risk of FRI?

You may be at higher risk of developing an infection if:

- your fracture broke through the skin ('open' fracture)
- you take steroids
- you have diabetes
- you have rheumatoid arthritis
- you smoke (this can delay wound healing, which increases the chance of infection)
- you have a disease that slows your immune system.

What can I do to help reduce my risk of developing an infection?

- Keep dressings clean and dry.
- Do not interfere with the surgical dressings yourself.
- Do not smoke.
- Maintain a healthy diet during your recovery.

What are the signs of FRI?

Look out for signs which may **suggest infection**. These include:

- pain (without weight bearing, increasing over time, new-onset)
- redness around the surgical site
- swelling around the surgical site
- increased skin temperature
- fever (single oral temperature measurement of more than 38.3°C).

Other **more obvious signs** are:

- wound breakdown (especially with bone or metalwork visible)
- pus draining from the wound
- persistent, increasing or new-onset of wound drainage or ooze, beyond the first few days postoperatively, without alternative explanation
- new-onset of joint swelling, redness and pain near the area of surgery.

What should I do if I suspect I may have a FRI?

If you experience the signs above that are **suggestive of infection** please contact the Fracture Clinic on 01872 253091 Monday to Friday (9am – 4pm).

If you experience the **more obvious signs listed above OR have concerns outside of Fracture Clinic working hours**, you should attend the Emergency Department at Royal Cornwall Hospital.

What investigations may I have if a FRI is suspected?

Investigations vary but can include:

- simple blood tests and wound swabs
- further imaging – such as X-rays or MRI scans, or
- more invasive procedures – such as joint aspiration (drawing fluid from a suspected infected joint) or exploratory surgery.