Advice following skin surgery

Procedure

Carried out on

General advice

- **Rest** – you should rest for the first 12 hours for a small procedure or for 72 hours for a larger procedure. If you have had surgery on your legs, keep the leg elevated for this time too. Avoid strenuous activities until the wound has fully healed. This is usually 1 week for the face and 2 to 3 weeks for the rest of the body. Be mindful of wounds on the back or near joints, and try to avoid stooping, bending or stretching until the wound has fully healed. You should also avoid bending forwards for a day or so if the wound is on your face to reduce the risk of bleeding.

- **Pain** – the local anaesthetic will wear off in 2 hours. You may experience a mild discomfort at the wound site for 1 to 2 days. You should take a simple pain killer such as paracetamol regularly. If the pain is not controlled with paracetamol alone, then you can take a non-steroidal pain killer such as ibuprofen too if it is safe for you to do so.

- **Numbness** – numbness from the local anaesthetic can spread inside the mouth following procedures on the mid and lower face. It is important to avoid hot food and drinks for 4 hours or until full sensation in the mouth has returned, as burns can develop.

- **Bleeding** – it is normal to experience minor oozing in the first 24 hours. If your wound bleeds do not dab it intermittently but press it gently but firmly without stopping for 15 minutes with a clean tissue or dressing. If your wound is on your arm or leg, lift the limb upwards as this will help to stop the bleeding. If the wound is on your head, ensure that you are sitting upright. If the wound is on your back, place a rolled-up towel on the dressings and compress it against the wall. If the bleeding does not stop, please contact the Dermatology department between the hours of 0800 and 1700 on weekdays on the number below or your local A&E department out of-hours.

- **Swelling and bruising** – this is common, particularly after facial procedures and surgery on or near the eyelids. Sometimes the swelling can prevent you from opening your eyes. Do not panic, this always resolves within 2 or 3 days. Sleeping at 30 to 40 degrees (reclined with 3 or 4 pillows) can help reduce facial swelling.

- **Infection** – if the wound becomes red, inflamed and painful, or starts discharging pus 48 to 72 hours after the procedure it may be infected. Please contact Dermatology **first** between the hours of 08.30-16.30(Monday to Friday). For out of hours or weekends, please contact

your GP, local A&E department or phone 111. **If you seek help, please inform the Dermatology Department on 0121 371 5469.**

- **Washing and showering** – specific instructions are given overleaf. You will usually be asked to keep dressed wounds clean and dry until the dressings or stitches are removed. If the wound is on the face or scalp, then you can still sit in the bath while keeping the face dry. Dry shampoos are available at most pharmacies and supermarkets, as an alternative to wet shampooing.

- **Vaseline** – if advised to use Vaseline, make sure it's a new tub. Please apply it with a cotton tipped bud to keep the Vaseline clean.

- **Alcohol and smoking** – avoid alcohol for 3 days after surgery as it increases the risk of bleeding and leads to poor wound healing. Smoking should be avoided for 2 weeks for similar reasons.

Stitches

☐ There are stitches

☐ **Internal stitches** – these are under the skin and will dissolve over the next 6 weeks. You may feel lumpiness under the scar line as they dissolve.

☐ **External stitches** –

☐ These need to be removed in…….. day/s time on…….

☐ Please make an appointment with the practice nurse at your GP surgery for the stitches to be removed.

☐ Please return to the Dermatology department for your stitches to be removed. Make an appointment at the reception desk before you leave.

☐ There are no stitches.

Dressings

The wound has been covered with a dressing. Please keep it clean and dry.

☐ There is a splash proof dressing which can withstand a gentle spray of water but will come off if it becomes soaked

☐ A temporary pressure dressing has been applied over the wound dressing. Remove this in 24/48 hours. Be sure not to disturb the dressing directly over the wound

☐ You may remove the dressing in 48 hours /…….. days. If the dressing is stuck down do not force it – soak it off with water instead. You can then shower over the wound. Gently wash the wound with warm tap water. Pat the wound dry and cover with either a dab of Vaseline or a simple Elastoplast until healed or leave open

☐ Remove the **Steri-Strips/Closure Strips in** 48 hours/____ days and the dressing as instructed. If the dressing is stuck to the wound, don't pull or force it off. Wet/soak it with clean water until it loosens. Once removed, gently wash the wound with warm tap water. Avoid scrubbing the wound

☐ Do not remove the dressing until you have your stitches removed or attend for a wound check as advised. Keep the area clean and dry. You may re-tape or reinforce the dressing as necessary. If the dressing comes off you can reapply another one, though if the area appears to be healing well it does not need to be dressed again

☐ The wound has not been covered with a dressing

☐ If an antibiotic ointment has been applied over the wound, please do not disturb it for 24 hours. After this time, you may shower over it – gently wash the wound with warm tap water and pat dry daily

☐ Apply Vaseline/Polyfax twice a day for 1 to 2 weeks. This will soften the scab and allow it to separate naturally. Do not pick the scab

Wound check and change of dressing

☐ Please arrange to see the practice nurse at your GP surgery for a wound check and change of dressing in…… days

☐ Please return to the Dermatology department for a wound check and change of dressing in ……. days

Follow up arrangements

☐ An appointment has been made in……. clinic in…… …week(s) time. Confirmation will be sent in the post

☐ A letter with the results will be sent to you

☐ A further appointment may be sent depending on the results

☐ No further follow up is required

Contact:

Dermatology Outpatients – **0121 371 5469**
Dermatology Secretaries – **0121 371 5121 / 5122 / 5123**

Accessibility



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