

WOUND CARE ADVICE FOLLOWING YOUR OPERATION

Information for patients



Department of
Dermatology

This leaflet has been written to answer questions you may have after your skin surgery.

The local anaesthetic will usually wear off in about 1-2 hours. During this time, do not do anything which could damage your wound. Avoid heavy lifting, stretching and doing any strenuous activity.

It is important to rest and eat a good balanced diet. This will aid your general healing and wellbeing and will help your wound to heal.

If you are in pain, we recommend that you take paracetamol, as instructed by the doctor or nurse.

Swelling can be a problem, especially if you have had a procedure around your eyes, lower legs or arms. This will be at its worst in the first 48 hours and will then slowly improve over time.

If you've had your wound closed with stitches, staples or 'scraped/shaved' off and cauterised, you will need to keep your dressing in place and dry for two days.

After two days you can shower or bathe as normal. Remove the wet dressing, dry the area gently but thoroughly and apply a plaster, if necessary.

Repeat this process until your stitches or staples are removed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

'Can I keep the original dressing on for more than 48 hours?'

You should remove the top layer of the dressing after 48 hours.

'When will I get my results?'

It can take up to five to six weeks to examine and confirm skin sample results. We will write to you within this time. Occasionally, we will make other arrangements with you for receiving your results, such as giving them to you in clinic.

Bleeding

If your wound starts to bleed or you notice blood on the dressing, do not panic. Slight oozing or spotting of blood on the dressing is normal. However, if the bleeding continues, apply firm, continuous pressure to the area for 20 minutes. (Usually this will stop most bleeding.)

'What should I do if I cannot stop the bleeding?'

Please contact the Dermatology department or your GP for advice. (See contact details on page 8.)

'What should I do if I take medication such as aspirin, warfarin or clopidogrel, which are blood thinners?'

You are at a slightly higher risk of bleeding and bruising, but do not stop taking your medication unless advised to do so.

Swelling and bruising

You may have some swelling or bruising around the area that was operated on. This is very likely if you have had surgery around your eyes. This should improve over time.

'My swelling is not going down.'

Please contact the Dermatology department (page 8) or your GP for advice if you are concerned.

Infection

We take every precaution to prevent a wound infection before, during and after your operation. Despite this, some wounds will still become infected.

Symptoms of a wound infection are increasing swelling, redness or pain during the week after the operation. You may also experience an unusual smell from the wound, a pus-like discharge or feel generally unwell.

'Who do I contact if I think I have an infection?'

Contact the Dermatology department (see contact details on page 8) or your GP if you have one or more of the above symptoms. You may be prescribed an antibiotic if the wound is infected.

Smoking

Smoking affects your healing. It is best to stop smoking completely or to at least reduce your daily amount of cigarettes for the duration of your healing.

Scarring

Every effort will be made to minimise the scar. However, on the chest, shoulders, back, arms and legs, scars can be bumpy, stretch out, be thickened or more noticeable.

You should avoid physical activities that put a strain on any stitches for the first 2-3 weeks. Straining the stitches may lead to the wound opening. This could affect how well it heals and how it looks once it has healed.

Some stitches are 'dissolvable', others are not. You will be told what type you have had before you leave.

After your stitches have been removed, massage the scar gently twice a day with a non-fragranced moisturiser (e.g. Vaseline). This will help improve the way it looks. You may develop a slight reaction to stitches under the skin, which will make the scar feel lumpy. This will settle in time.

Numbness

Numbness can occur in the area of the scar. Usually this will improve over time, but can last up to two years or longer (in rare cases).

CLOSURE OF YOUR WOUND(S)

You have had a procedure where:

- stitches were used
 - stitches were not used
 - some or all of the wound is left open to heal
 - Steristrips were used
 - medical staples were used
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- Your stitches/staples will need to be removed in the Dermatology department in days.
 - Please make an appointment with your GP's practice nurse in days to have the stitches/staples removed. If your wound was closed with staples, we will provide you with a staple remover to give to the practice nurse.

Please take this leaflet with you when you have your stitches removed and show it to the person removing your stitches.

INFORMATION FOR YOUR PRACTICE NURSE/DOCTOR:

If you suspect an infection, please swab the area before prescribing an antibiotic. Please also contact the Dermatology department to let us know (see the next page for contact details).

Thank you for continuing the care of this patient.

Diagnosis/Treatment/Procedure:

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Date seen in Dermatology Outpatients:

Type of suture used:

Number of sutures:

Removal of sutures (days):

The following dressing is recommended/applied:

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Additional information:

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Follow-up appointment with Dermatology (if applicable):

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HOW TO CONTACT US:

Dermatology (Theatres Nurses Station)

Tel: **01865 228 241**

(Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 5.00pm)

Please leave a message with your name and contact number.

If you are worried and you want advice outside office hours, please contact the On-call Dermatologist by calling the Oxford University Hospitals switchboard.

Tel: **0300 304 7777**

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.



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charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

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