



Having Skin Surgery

This leaflet aims to answer any questions you may have about your surgery.

Why are you having skin surgery?

Your dermatologist has recommended that you have surgery to diagnose your skin problem. This may involve a skin biopsy to remove a lesion or to take a sample of your skin. The piece of skin removed is looked at under the microscope which will help diagnose the problem.

Before your operation

Prior to the procedure, a member of our team will discuss the operation with you and ask you to sign a consent form. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions relating to your surgery. It is likely that you will be able to continue to take all your regular medications. However, your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you in more detail.

Please let your doctor know if you: Take blood thinning medications such as warfarin, aspirin or clopidogrel.

Have had an allergic reaction to local anaesthetic, latex or sticking plaster.
Have a pacemaker.

You have a blood-borne infection such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV.

What happens during the operation?

You will be awake throughout the surgery. First of all, you will be given a local anaesthetic injection, which will cause a stinging sensation for a few moments. This numbs the area where you are having surgery so you won't feel any pain during the procedure, just some pressure and movement.

Most skin surgery takes around 30 minutes but the more complicated procedures will take longer. Usually stitches are used to close the wounds.

Afterwards

You may need to stay for about 20 minutes to make sure you feel alright and for a nurse to check the wound site. When you are ready to leave, your nurse will give you information on how to care for your wound and, if necessary, when your stitches need to be removed.

They will advise you on any pain relief you will need. Make sure you have some paracetamol at home, in case you need it.

Are friends and family allowed into the operating theatre?

We do not normally allow friends and family into the operating theatre as this can increase the chance of spreading infection. If you have children, you will need to have a relative or friend with you to look after them during the operation.

Risks and side effects

Most operations of this kind are straightforward but any skin surgery will have risks including scarring, bleeding and wound infection. The doctor or nurse performing the operation will discuss these and any additional risks or side effects with you at the time of operation. You will be provided with a wound care information leaflet that will explain how to care for the wound should any complications occur (such as bleeding and infection).

All skin surgery will result in a scar. You should avoid physical activities that put a strain on the scar for two or three weeks. After the stitches have been removed, massage the scar gently with a moisturiser to help it settle.

Small nerves may get damaged during surgery and it may feel numb around the scar. This usually improves with time. With more complicated surgery, some of the larger nerves can get damaged. This will be explained to you before the surgery.

Going Home

You will be able to go home after the procedure. The anaesthetic (numbing agent) should wear off within two to three hours. If you experience pain after this period, you can take some paracetamol.

We advise you not to drive home, particularly if the procedure has been on your hands, feet or near your eyes. You may wish to bring someone with you or arrange for a friend to take you home.