



Looking after your wound following Skin Surgery (without stitches)

Introduction

This leaflet aims to answer any questions you may have after your skin surgery. Your wound has been left open and will slowly heal up by itself without the need for stitches. This has avoided the need for more complicated surgery and your wound will heal gradually like a deep graze.

Looking after your wound

Keep any dressing in place for two days. You can still wash but avoid getting the wound wet. After two days, you can bath and shower as normal. Clean the wound gently with soap. Lightly pat the wound dry and then apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly (e.g. Vaseline®). This will help keep the wound moist and allow it to heal faster with less scarring.

Continue applying the petroleum jelly until the wound has fully healed. Open wounds heal more slowly. A large wound can take 4 weeks or more to heal.

A dressing (e.g. a plaster or gauze & tape) can be applied to protect the wound and keep it clean. The dressing should be changed if it is dirty, wet or lifting off.

Pain

Open wounds often are more uncomfortable than wounds closed with stitches. The local anaesthetic will tend to wear off within one or two hours. Your wound will be red and sore for at least 48 hours. If you are in pain, we recommend you take paracetamol as instructed by the doctor or nurse. It is best to avoid ibuprofen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs) as painkillers, as they can enhance bleeding. Do not stop your aspirin or other blood thinning drugs unless instructed by your doctor.

Bleeding

Slight oozing or spotting of blood on the dressing is normal. However, if you experience heavy bleeding, apply firm, continual pressure to the area for 20 minutes. This will usually stop the bleeding. If bleeding continues, repeat continual pressure for a further 20 minutes. If bleeding still persists, please contact the dermatology department or your GP for advice.

Infection

We take every precaution before, during and after your procedure to prevent a wound infection. An antibiotic ointment is often applied at the time of surgery before the dressing is applied. Despite this, some wounds will still become infected. Symptoms include an unpleasant smell, discharge, fever, pain and swelling. If this occurs please contact your GP or the dermatology department.

General information

Swelling and bruising

Swelling and bruising may occur, especially if you have had surgery around the face and eyes. This can take 10-14 days to start reducing. If swelling occurs, then resting and sleeping on an extra pillow can help reduce the swelling.

Smoking

Smoking affects wound healing. You are advised to stop or reduce your smoking during the healing process.

Scarring

Scarring occurs after all surgery. The use of petroleum jelly massaged into the scar can help.

Numbness

It may feel numb around the scar. This usually improves with time.