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Lancashire Teaching Hospitals
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A Guide to a Split Skin Graft

Excellent care with compassion

Division of Surgery - Plastic Surgery and Burns Facility

@LancsHospitals

Why?

People need to have a skin graft for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Skin loss due to trauma/accidents
- To replace skin after removal of skin growths

How?

The Surgeon will remove a very thin piece of skin, from an unaffected area on the body, often the thigh or upper arm, but any area of good skin can be used. The procedure will be carried out in theatre. The procedure can either be carried out while you are asleep under a general anaesthetic or with a local anaesthetic which is injected around the area which is to be operated on.

Management

The graft will be stitched, stapled or glued in place, often with a sponge dressing over the graft. Occasionally on the face, the graft may be stitched in place but left without a dressing, antibiotic cream may be applied. If this is the case we will supply you with the cream (the cream is an eye ointment) along with instructions of how to apply it. Your wound will be reviewed between 5-7 days in the Nurse Led Dressing Clinic near ward 4.

You may have to stay in hospital until after the first inspection of your skin graft depending on where your graft is.

If this is necessary, when you are discharged from hospital, arrangements will be made for review of your graft with a health care professional. This will usually take place in the Nurse Led Dressing Clinic near to Ward 4.

Care of your graft

To allow your graft time to heal, it is important to keep the area protected from any undue pressure and minimise any movement of the affected area. It is also important to keep the area clean and dry, unless otherwise instructed by a health care professional. Please see below specific instruction by graft location:

Graft to arm or hand: you will need to keep the area elevated using a sling or by placing the arm / hand on pillows when sat in a chair.

Graft to face or head: ensure you do NOT lie down flat, so you will need to sleep/sit upright supported by pillows. Try not to bend forward as this can increase bleeding to the area.

Graft to leg or foot: it is important to limit the amount of walking you do. When sitting you need to elevate the leg to reduce any swelling.

What to expect when you first see your skin graft

Initially your skin graft may be a variety of colours from white to very dark red, but eventually the graft site will resemble your natural skin tone, though there may always be a slight difference from the graft site to the surrounding skin. If you have had some form of skin lesion removed, there may be a hollow in the area where there has been a skin graft. This may look quite unattractive when the first dressing is changed, but the hollow will gradually fill out over a period of months and the final result may not be quite as noticeable.

Donor site

The area the skin graft is taken from is covered with a firm dressing and that is normally left in place for 10-14 days until it has healed. The wound may leak into the dressing leaving a dark stained area on the dressing. This can have an offensive smell but this is quite normal. The dressing site may require re- padding or for the outer dressing to be

changed. This area can be painful and the use of pain killers may be regularly required. Please do NOT remove your dressing yourself at home. This dressing will be removed in the Nurse Led Dressing Clinic or by the District Nurse. The area will appear red and dry/flaky. However, with regular cleansing, moisturising, massaging and following the steps below in the aftercare information, the site redness will gradually fade and become less noticeable.

Aftercare

When both your graft and donor areas are healed, the areas need to be cleansed three times a day using a mild soap and patted dry. You should then apply a gentle moisturising cream and continue to massage until the cream is completely absorbed.

Precautions

It is important that your skin graft and donor site are not exposed to the sun, for at least the first 12-18 months, so please:

- Wear clothing that covers the sites
- Use sunscreen SPF 30+ or total sunblock
- Stay in the shade when outdoors

These precautions will reduce the risk of permanent colour change to the area.

Signs of infection to the skin graft or donor site may include

1. Redness
2. Swelling
3. Smelling wound
4. Increased exudate
5. Increased pain

   Please call ward 4 if any concerns.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact

Ward 4 (Plastic Surgery and Burns facility)	01772 522244
Plastic Surgery Dressing Clinic	01772 523542 (Mon – Fri, 9am - 4pm)

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk
www.nhs.uk
www.patient.co.uk
www.accessable.co.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking including Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal.

If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:
આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઇતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણ માં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:
Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi."

Polish:
Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਚਿ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਚਿ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:
پوچھیے۔یہ معلومات دوسری ضرورت ہے تو برائے مہربانیسمجھنے کے لیے مدد کی اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات بھی دستیاب ہو سکتی ہے زبانوں اور بڑی چھپائی میں

Arabic:
بأحرف مطبوعةٌ المعلومات هذه توفير يمكن. تطلب أن يُرجى المعلومات هذه فهم في مساعدةً تريد كنتَ إذا أخرى وبلغات كبيرة

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